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¶The Last Days of SHYLOCK

¶ Books by LUDWIG LEWISOHN

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ARTHUR SZYK
1946

*The
Last Days of
Shylock*

by

LUDWIG LEWISOHN

*With Drawings by
ARTHUR SZYK*

New York and London

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THE LAST DAYS OF SHYLOCK

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M-E

IS THIS MERE LEGEND OF AN ANTIQUE RACE,
REHEARSAL OF A LONG-FORGOTTEN WOE?
OR ARE WE HAUNTED STILL BY THAT DISGRACE
AND SHATTERED BY THE SELFSAME OVERTHROW?

DID NOT BUT YESTERDAY THE EASTERN WIND
BRING US THE MESSAGE OF OUR CHILDREN SLAIN,
AND OF THAT WOUND SO LONG UNMEDICINED
RENEWING WITH FRESH SPILTH ITS WORLD-OLD
PAIN?

AND HAVE WE ANY COMFORT? SURELY THIS:
THAT STILL THE VICTOR SUFFERS ON THE ROOD,
THE STRICKEN WHO CAN FRONT THE LAST ABYSS
AND BY HIS LOVE'S IMMORTAL FORTITUDE

WREST FROM THE STUBBORN UNIVERSE'S CORE
THE GOD, BELOVÈD, WHOM MEN SEEK ONCE MORE.

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¶The Last Days of SHYLOCK



THE FIRST CHAPTER

OF HIS COMING FROM THE TRIAL

*“I pray you, give me leave to go from hence;
I am not well: send the deed after me,
And I will sign it.”*

IT WAS Daniel, the half-wit son of Chus, who had for hours been crouching in a dark gondola close to the shore at the shabby eastern extremity of the Riva degli Schiavoni. The sober-minded Tubal, with other elders and rulers of the community, was meanwhile waiting in the long shadow of Shylock's house in the Ghetto. Vainly had he striven to persuade his countryman to compound for money and release Antonio. Shylock had bitten his beard and turned upon his friend eyes glowing with a strange, abstract but inextinguishable fire. “Let not the thorn enter your flesh so deeply,” Tubal had pleaded. “On me, too, has he voided his rheum; I know as well as you that he was the informer and took the wage of four hundred *lige* when the accursed Trevisano caused all our sacred books to be burned in the Piazza. But he is not evil. He thought that he was pleasing

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his God. And we, we do not kill. Moreover, they will trick and defeat you by some means." Shylock had still gnawed his beard in bitter silence. Tubal had gone forth to Chus and said, "The loss of the child has robbed him of reason and prudence; it will go ill with him."

Chus had thrown up his hands in despair. "He always tortured his soul beyond reason; he could never reconcile himself to injustice; he dreams of a Messiah to right our wrongs."

Tubal had nodded. Whereupon these two, over a goblet of Cyprus wine in the sombre house of Chus, had made plans against the inevitable discomfiture and danger of their friend.

The boy Daniel grimaced with relief. The sun was westering and a cooling shadow fell across his body in the gondola. He half lifted himself and gazed steadily westward to where, in front of the Doge's palace, the winged lion on its tall column stood bright against the fading sky. He had the untroubled watchful eyes of an animal. He put one hand upon a rusty black cloak folded flat beside him. He lifted himself somewhat higher and caught sight of a wavering yellow splotch that appeared suddenly beside the column, and rose and dipped a little or came nearer by a step or two and receded again. He knew the yellow Jew's hat to be his for

Of His Coming from the Trial

whom he was waiting, and remained patient and unmoved.

The wavering turned into a definite faltering forward, and under the ugly yellow glare of the hat a dark, bowed, slender figure became visible. Daniel, the son of Chus, rose and drew himself up and let the black cloak flutter like a sinister flag in the evening wind. There were but a few people of the poorer sort about, fishermen and gondoliers; they had had no news of the strange trial in the Doge's palace; the doings of the great mattered but little to them, and though one or two loitered for a moment they paid but a listless attention to the boy in the gondola signalling to the staggering old Jew. Only one mahogany-brown old fisherman with large gold rings in his ears crossed himself as Shylock, approaching at last, fixed upon him bloodshot, desperate, stormy, and unseeing eyes. With pale, shaking, blue-veined hands Shylock took the black cloak from Daniel; he wrapped himself in it closely as though he meant to wrap himself in night and death, and, moaning suddenly, he slipped off the shameful yellow hat and drew the cloak's hood over his rime-grey head.

Trembling, he stepped into the gondola and dropped into the worn leather seat. The boy Daniel grasped the heavy single oar with both hands for

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the long, obscure row past the old arsenal out to sea and down the Sacca della Misericordia, through narrow malodorous lagoons to the Ghetto Nuovo. The head of Shylock was bowed. The anguished eyes, the nether lip with its unfathomable despair, the trembling beard, were hidden. He pressed his hands over his bitter heart. They had tricked him; they had brought that effeminate young advocate from Rome to despoil and trick him with every show of grace and reason. For who in all the world had ever heard of the legality of a contract which did not render legal the means for carrying out its own provisions? Yet of that circumstance he was careless enough. Blood had always sickened him. Scarcely could he pass by the house of the ritual butcher in its dark alley. His knife would not have gone very deep into the bosom of his adversary. The bitterness that flooded his soul did so because they had robbed him of his triumph, of that hour, of that moment in which he could have felt uplifted above the thousand sufferings of his tribe, the innumerable humiliations of his sacred nation, the restrictions, the expulsions, the flayings, the burnings, tears and wails, terrors and corruptions, blood and sweat. Shiver after shiver went through his body. He had an impulse toward wild, crazed laughter. The Duke, who had tightened every Jewish restriction and deepened every Jewish shame,

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as every ruler in Italy had done since the Pope and his minions had begun to tremble at the power of the heretics of the north—this Duke had had the evil effrontery to ask of him human gentleness and love; Antonio, the instigator of the burning of the sacred books, had railed at the hardness of his Jewish heart; the stripling from Rome, the very source and centre of all the heightened cruelties and horrors of the past years, had addressed to him, to him and to his nation, a mellifluous discourse on that quality of mercy which neither he nor his had ever found in any Christian heart. It was the dreadful injustice that seared his soul; it was the inextricable coil of moral confusion that made his very marrow to melt in misery. Fines and confiscations! How accustomed were he and his to those! His goods were not all in Venice; of those that were here not the half could be proved to be his. Enforced baptism? That was bitterer. But he could either undergo it and then flee by a sure way open to him and resume the sacred religion of his fathers under a kinder heaven, or he could purchase his eternal place in *Gan Eden* like those four-and-twenty holy martyrs of Ancona whom the inquisitors had burned ten years ago almost to a day. But he had believed that his vows had in truth been registered in heaven, that he had had an hour's compact with the eternal King of the Universe by

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which Israel, *malchut kahanim v'goy kadosh*—kingdom of priests and sacred nation—was for once through him to triumph over the oppressor and his wiles. It was not to be; it was not fated. How great must be the sins of Israel in the eyes of the Eternal for so small a crumb of comfort to be refused. How far off must be the days of deliverance, the days of the Messiah, despite the mystic messages from Safed in Galilee, despite the comfortable gleams and prophecies of the newly found Book of Zohar which he had searched by night and by day. Strange that, of all the passages he had pondered, this one should float into his mind—this one, “A tradition teaches us that all the gates of heaven are closed, except the gate of tears.” He bowed his head lower still; the fires in his brain and marrow seemed to lose a little of their searing power. His lids were wet.

The Ghetto was dark when the gondola reached it; windows were hung and lights hooded. Shylock laid a blessing hand upon the head of Daniel, the son of Chus, and his heart contracted once more in bitterness because he was now a childless man. Worse than childless. He must perform the ceremonies of the dead for Jessica, his child, and know that she, who had lain under the heart of Leah, his wife, was reeling, with varnished face and blasphemous word, in the glittering rout of the heathen. It was not granted

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him to see her safe and dead at his foot. At last he wept as he walked wearily across the rude stones toward his house hard by the synagogue. Here long-familiar sounds met him. In the house of study and prayer men were intoning a penitential psalm. Had the news of the defeat and shame of himself, and so of all Israel, reached here so soon? The desire stirred in him to enter the synagogue and raise his voice in prayer and lamentation. He dared not. Even now the court's messenger with the execrable deed that he was doomed to sign might be upon his way.

He turned to his door and in the shadow of it found Tubal and Chus, his friends. They laid kind hands upon his shoulders; they supported his weary steps. High up they climbed, and still higher; for the people of the Ghetto, forbidden to build new houses or to enlarge its boundaries, had been forced to pile storey upon storey. At last, on a far upper floor they stopped and, unlocking a rude heavy door, entered a large chamber warm with rich hangings, lined with dark chests of carved oak, containing arm-chairs both of silken embroidery and of Cordovan leather. The dim light of the moon shining in faintly, Shylock lit no lamp. He led the way to a divan; he sat down between his friends. In a whisper, broken by sobs, in the tongue of his people, he spoke. Lower and lower were bowed the three aged

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heads. Suddenly, upon a word of Tubal, they arose, and Shylock, drawing forth a bunch of large keys, opened chest after chest of those that lined the room, and drew forth caskets and jewel-cases and purses of gold ducats and the bonds of debtors, among whom were princes and nobles and magnificoes and princes of the Church. These things Tubal and Chus took into their keeping and bestowed in inner pockets of their long black fur-trimmed coats. Then they took leave of their friend and groped their way down the dim stairs and disappeared in the dark alleys behind the synagogue.

Shylock panted. A faintness threatened to overcome him. With trembling hands he struck fire and lit the wick of a lamp of heavy bronze. He groped in the at first flickering light after a silver jug and cup and plate upon a Moorish tabouret in a corner. There were left a few mouthfuls of cake; there were both wine and water. He ate the cake slowly; he poured a little wine into a goblet of water. A degree of strength came back into his frame; his overwhelmed spirit, tenacious with the enforced tenacity of the ages, raised itself up. Goods and securities to the value of half a million ducats were in safe-keeping. The Venetians would not reduce him to beggary; the half of his remaining goods would not greatly enrich such prodigals as Antonio. A few more

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friends of the stripe of Bassanio was all the royal merchant needed. As for the deed, which he was bound to sign, leaving the remainder of his goods to Jessica and Lorenzo—why, if he refused baptism and died in the flames of the Holy Office, he would see to it that little was left. There were ships in the harbour and poor men in the Ghetto. If he consented to a momentary and a false submission, he would not die, if only the Eternal sustained him for a little longer, in this accursed land. He drew himself up; he cast aside the rusty cloak and hood that Daniel had given him; he put on an embroidered cap of black velvet. He prayed in penitence to the God of his fathers. He and his friends had forgotten to kiss the *mezuzah* at the door on entering; he had in his anguish and faintness forgotten to wash his hands before eating. But God would forgive him who was staggering under the blows of the heathen. For God has remembered us in our abasement—he murmured the comfortable words—and has delivered us from our enemies, for his loving-kindness is everlasting. *Vayifrkemu mizarenu, Ki Polam chasedo!*

His quick ear heard a light, hesitant step on the wooden stair. Then came a tap at his door, inexplicably gentle. Not thus were the bailiffs of State or Church apt to knock at a Jew's door. He clasped

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his hands tightly; he held his breath. Could it be Jessica repentant? His head drooped. A fool who nursed vain hopes. "Enter," he cried harshly. It was, of course, the clerk of that stripling advocate from Rome, himself a stripling who hid his body effeminate in the black lawyer's cloak. From under his bushy grey brows Shylock regarded with cold severity the meek messenger of ill. The messenger's eyes fell. Shylock arose. "Enter," he said again. The figure came into the middle of the room and cast a fearful glance behind. "Here is the deed, which you are to sign!" A parchment scroll appeared from under the cloak. Shylock regarded the hand that held the scroll; he repeated in his inner ear the words and the voice. He went close to the messenger. He peered again. A woman! Undoubtedly a woman! How like the heathen to mingle mummery and shallow foppery with their injustice and their cruelty, to make of life a game and a masque. Contemptuously he took the scroll from that delicate hand and unrolled it by the light of the lamp. It bore the stamp and seal of the Doge and the Council of Ten; it contained the threatened provisions. He carried it to his table; he signed it with a long pen made of a peacock's feather; he strewed a little sand to dry the ink. He turned and he saw the round face of the messenger pale with fear. He thrust the

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scroll forward. "Go, shameless wench!" She took the scroll and fled. He heard the small tapping of her fleeing feet on the stairs. Thus had he often listened to the sound of the light feet of Jessica, his child, his only one. Gone. Gone and lost forever. He dropped into an arm-chair.



THE SECOND CHAPTER OF HIS FAR YOUTH

"Thou call'dst me dog before thou hadst a cause."

HIS lids burned. He knew that sleep would not come to him on that night. Tomorrow or even tonight the constables of the Holy Office might come to drag him to the baptismal font. He knew already that he would go. Not chiefly because he was not made of the stuff that could sanctify the Name by death through fire. He had an object. He wanted to live in order to help right the balance in the hand of justice. He and all Israel needed to be sustained by that righting of the balance. For the times had grown more and more evil and the Messiah had not come. The learned and saintly Abra-vanel had predicted the coming for the heathen year of fifteen hundred and thirty-one. Instead of comfort more shattering woes had come upon God's people. There had been for them no tranquillity and no breath of peace, but burnings and plunderings and expulsions and all shame and all bitter hu-

Of His Far Youth

miliation and the feet of Israel were weary and its spirit sick unto faintness. There were those who lived for the day and praised God if it set in peace and comforted themselves till the next calamity with well-wrought silver lamps and vessels and noble feasts on New Year and Passover and at circumcisions or betrothals in their crowded houses. He had never been among these who could enjoy fugitive goods between tempest and tempest. Perhaps his house had been too sober for a growing girl. The thought smote upon his heart. But did not Jessica know? Had he not told her the tales and, when she grew mature enough read her the letters of brethren scattered throughout the world? Had she not, when he had read to her the *Emek Ha'Bacha*, The Vale of Tears, of Joseph Ha'Kohen—had she not mingled her tears with those of all Israel? He pressed his hands against his forehead. He was not of those who could forget. Images once imprinted upon his mind remained; injustice gnawed at his soul; cruel and importunate memories pursued him into the very house of prayer. An hundred times he had hindered himself thousands of ducats and thwarted his best bargains by hot rages against Christian debtors, by the harsh ironies of speech which he did not spare to use even to Cardinals and princes.

He leaned back in his chair; he closed his eyes.

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He had been a greater fool than Launcelot Gobbo, that fool of Hagar's offspring! He clenched his hands upon his knees. Why not? Why not? Was not this life of exile enough to drive men mad? Nor had Israel ever groaned or bled but what in that hour and in that minute, especially here in Venice, the night had seemed suddenly to blaze forth with the masques and dances of the heathen, their torches and false-faces—swine's heads or bear's or bull's—and to echo with the thumpings of drums and the squealing of wry-necked fifes and songs and loutish gibes and drunken chatter. Even so had the revellers danced and reeled through the Ghetto on that night on which his own flesh and blood had betrayed him and left him desolate. How very weary he was! He turned his head with its closed eyes from side to side. Should he not seek his couch if but for an hour? He knew he would gain no repose. A fever tingled in his old body. He had not thought to come to this pass, to this execrable shame of baptism. He was old now. For three score years and three he had braved a bitter world. God might have spared him that, seeing what his life had been and of what memories the texture of his past was woven.

Memories, memories! He sighed and his beard quivered upon his chest. For the very earliest of all his memories was one of tumult and woe. Foreign

Of His Far Youth

soldiery had overrun the city and the Republic; bearded men in rusty armour with long pikes, brawling, drunken men who jabbered strange languages had knocked with their staffs at the door of his father's house, which stood in the Calle dei Botteri not far from the Rialto. His father, a brother physician of the great Joseph Mantin, had been abroad, visiting the sick, healing the wounded of the war. Himself, a little lad, had been upstairs in his mother's chamber. He could see his mother in her long, full-skirted brocaded robe; he could see her white, slender hands protrude delicately from the wide, fur-bordered sleeves. He could still see the sudden terror in her eyes as she had heard the clank of mailed footsteps on the stairs. She had hidden him behind her in the folds of her ample robe; pale and erect she had faced the drunken marauders who appeared at the door of the chamber with filthy beards and blinking eyes. The two foremost in the door nudged each other and leered. He had felt his mother tremble. Suddenly she had bent over to a chest beside her and flung it open and had taken out of it coins with her small hands and thrown them over the heads of the soldiers into the hallway where one could hear the small patter of a few rolling down the stairs. The jaws of the soldiers had dropped. The lady had flung another handful of

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coins and another. The men turned and laughed drunkenly and gathered up the money and reeled and stumbled after it down the stairs and were then heard in the antechamber below quarrelling over it. Next they were in the street and one of the servants who had first scurried into hiding took heart and slammed the door behind them.

His father had come home not long thereafter, white under his glossy black beard, deathly white of face between the robe and hat of sable velvet. He had wrung his long, skilful scholarly hands. "It is like Mizrayim, the house of bondage from which Moses delivered us. For the seven long years of the war they have pressed us for special taxes and heavy imposts and crushed our banking houses with huge enforced loans. They have fought and plundered and have made us pay therefor. But that is not enough. They are now sending forth the word that but for Jewish perfidy the war would have had a happier issue for the Republic; we are to be driven from our houses into a small unhealthy quarter to live; we are to wear a saffron hat as a sign of our supposed perfidy. I hastened to the Doge; he would not see me. Pacing the great outer hall of the palace the Councilor Grandenigo tried to brush by me. I caught him by the sleeve. 'I saved your child's life but a month agone,' I cried. He dared not meet my



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eyes. He murmured that the Council of Ten was mindful of my worth and the worth of others among our brethren. But the magnificoes were yielding to the pressure of the merchants of wool and silk and sugar and pepper and to the clamour of the populace against us! I replied that there were no Christian merchants dealing in such commodities and that the populace was not clamouring. He assumed an appearance of injured dignity. The Council could not permit me to instruct it. He fled."

Had all that come to pass more than fifty years ago? It was in truth like a dream, but like a dream of yester-night. The old man in the arm-chair nodded his weary head. He could see that scene, could see his mother put her two soft hands upon his father's cheeks, could see that look that passed between them: so long as we have one another. . . . Then a vein began to swell and redden on Shylock's forehead. There were things of which time did not dull the ignominy and the pain. Such was the swift and merciless expulsion of the Jews from their houses in the city in the accursed year fifteen hundred and sixteen. The Christian carters demanded fees such as they had not seen in all their wretched lives; they were drunk and full of oaths and bawdy jests and broke and scratched and tossed maliciously about the objects entrusted to their care. For the

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Jews themselves had had to carry their caskets of valuables and their sacred vessels: their wine-cups for the ushering in of the Sabbath, their spice-boxes for the ushering out of the sacred day, their scrolls of the Law and their scrolls for the feast of Purim and their Sabbath candles and their oil-cruses and their lamps for the commemoration of the Maccabees. And the populace, whether inspired thereto by the Signoria and the burghers who wanted to steal the Jews' trade or not, had made a feast day of the day of expulsion and had followed the carts with jeers and raucous cries and had thrown mud and stones at grave men and delicately nurtured women and little children. The vein on Shylock's forehead throbbed. Even as all the boys in Venice had followed him on that day but a week before when in his anguish and rage he had cried out after his stolen ducats and his faithless daughter. Which of the two scenes was near? Which was far? Which was of his childhood and which of his old age? The pain, the ignominy, the throttling sense of wrong unmerited brought upon one's head by the very dregs and offscourings of mankind—these were the same, forever the same. Shylock lifted his hands in an imprecatory gesture. The Messiah must come; the day of justice must not delay. The God of Israel is *El Emeth*, a God of Truth and a faithful God.

Of His Far Youth

There had been turmoil in the narrow Ghetto to which his people had now been confined. Some in truth had fled to Ferrara, to Genoa, to Mantua and Milan and a few as far as Cyprus and the lands of the Sultan. But most had stayed where were the memories of their youth and their livelihood and the burial-places of their fathers. They had somehow bestowed themselves in the rickety houses of the Ghetto and had patched them and built them higher; they had built a synagogue and established houses of study and the scrolls of the Torah had been written by scribes and children had been born into Israel. Little by little, in narrow confines, after an uglier and less wholesome fashion, life had resumed its common tread. Only the great physician Joseph Mantin was permitted to live in the city and even he had to beg and bribe for the renewal of this privilege from year to year. He, too, was exempted from the wearing of the saffron hat. Shylock could remember the stern and desperate look on his father's face when this exemption was harshly denied him. For the wearing of the saffron hat, by proclamation of the Council of Ten a symbol of perfidy and a mark of degradation, was a thing of a very strange and subtle kind. Far years and ancient agonies stole into Shylock's soul. He thought they had been forgotten. For a quarter of a century now he had worn

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the yellow hat whether on the Piazza di San Marco or on the Rialto with a cold and stubborn pride. He had made it, for himself, a symbol of power and even of fear. He had raised the rate of usance in Venice beyond need and beyond security; he had no use for the bags upon bags of ducats that were heaped up in his house or kept in the counting houses of his friends. He had sent princely gifts to his stricken brethren in Frankfurt and Ancona. When an obscene rabble tore up the graveyard in Mantua and split the headstones of the defenceless dead, it was his gold that had healed and comforted and rebuilt; when a mob, instigated by the Holy Office, had snatched and torn and voided their urine on the thirteen scrolls of the holy Torah which were the pride and consolation of the brethren who dwelt in Pesaro, it was his gold that had kept busy the scribes of the Law in Safed and Jerusalem until the scrolls were replaced. But he who wears the saffron hat must be hated or hounded, feared or despised; he must have power or day by day there will be none so low but what will foot him even as one spurns a stranger cur.

The old man in the dim room sighed. The lamp was guttering. He did not rise to fetch the oil-cruse. The darkness but made his vision clearer. It had been in the very year of his *Bar-Mitzvah*, of his re-

Of His Far Youth

ception as a man among the men of Israel, that the evil decrees of segregation and shame had been promulgated. They had put on him the gaberdine and the yellow hat. But he was only thirteen and small for his age and his mother had clasped him to her gentle bosom and pled for him when he had not wanted to pass the confines of the Ghetto in that garb. At last he had ventured forth and reached in peace the edge of the Cannareggia. But there a butcher's boy, pushing a cart of fresh slaughtered, bleeding swine's carcasses, had seen him, and had put his great, red, raw hands to his mouth and whistled loud and shrill. From near-by alleys came other oafs of the same kidney, two in number. The butcher's boy had set down the handle of his cart; he pointed to the Jewish child in the peaked yellow hat and held his sides and swung to and fro with empty ribald laughter. The other two came down on him like wolves. They grasped with their hard fists his arms and shoulders; he could smell their rancid breath and the foulness of their ragged hose, reeking with sweat and ordure. He heard their shouts and saw with horror their great round open mouths. They dragged him to the cart; they took out and lifted up the bleeding carcasses of the swine and held them to his bosom and cuffed and kicked him and bade him kiss the snout of a dead swine and

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dance with it. He was dabbled with swine's blood; his pale face was crimson with it. Horror and unspeakable disgust rose in his throat; his bosom threatened to burst. He fainted and the louts, a little abashed, went on their way. Old Pinchas, the *Shammat*, the kind white-bearded beadle, found him there and picked him up and brought him home for lustral baths in the bath-house of the synagogue and healing draughts and the comfort of his mother's tenderness and tears.

He had clung to the Ghetto after that day. He had hidden himself in the *Yeshibah*, the brown Talmudic school behind the synagogue; he had risen at dawn, "when the blue is severed from the white and the wolf from the hound," as was written in the ancient books, and had pronounced his morning benedictions and had hastened to the *Yeshibah*; often the middle of the night still found him there and his mother had hoped and his father had feared that in him had been found a *Mathmid*, a holy youth consecrated forever to the contemplation of the Law. They had not known how often over the folios his raised eyes had stared at the sombre wall, his fists had been clenched, his soul had been wrung with horror and fear and rage. From the most secret bottom of a chest his father had brought forth a yellow, parchment manuscript of Maimonides'

Of His Far Youth

More Nebuchim, the Guide of the Perplexed, and given it to him. "It clears the mind," the grave physician said to his son. But the youth had found the arguments of the great Rambam dry and nothing to his purpose. For whether propositions are accepted as axioms or dialectically proven, such distinctions brought no whit nearer the liberation of Israel or the fall of its foes. And it was for this that his spirit thirsted. His father had offered to instruct him in the healing art and afterwards to send him to Padua, where Jewish students might receive instruction and even, without abjuring their faith, become "doctors of medicine and of the arts" through diplomas given by the *Collegium Venetum*. The youth had shaken his head.

"The canon law of the Church forbids our practising among Christians. I will not secretly slink forth in the yellow hat to bring them healing and comfort."

"If he that hateth thee be hungry, give him bread to eat," his father had quoted from the Writings. Shylock had cast down his eyes but his heart had burned rebelliously within him.

When he was seventeen his father had died. A monk who had encountered the Jewish physician at a Christian's death-bed had raised a great hue and cry, had clamoured through the streets and wept

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aloud under the arches of the Doge's palace. Under the shadow of the Campanile he had raised high a crucifix. Thus was the canon law of Mother Church flouted by the godless Venetians. Shylock's father had always believed that the monk had been a hireling of Christian leeches who wanted the Jews' practice. He had half believed his father then. In later years he had been sure. For Antonio had informed the Signoria concerning the existence of forbidden Talmudic literature not only for the informer's fee, but because he had furnished moneys to a Christian printer who wanted the forbidden books burned, seeing a rumour had reached him from Rome that new editions, cleansed of impiety by priests, might be permitted later. Rarely was the cruelty of the Christians thriftless. Had not his father, after that fierce and loud denunciation, been turned from all familiar doors? Had not they who had once summoned him and loved him now ostentatiously spat upon his gaberdine? Had he not sat in his house brooding, with empty hands? And now a treacherous malady had crept upon him, which had made even the eminent Joseph Mantin sorrowfully shake his head. Soon the widow and her son were sitting on the floor of their house desolate and in mourning.

His mother had clung to him and there was gold in the house. Tubal, three years older than Shylock,

Of His Far Youth

an Aaronite of high lineage, had counselled him. "There are prodigals on the Rialto; gold begets gold by reason of their thriftlessness. You can frequent them an hour a day and devote ten hours to the law and yet increase your substance and gain power." Shylock had set his teeth and gone with Tubal to the Rialto. No one jeered or spat upon him on that day. Glittering gallants with jewelled swords, gold brocaded Spanish doublets and plumed hats had bidden him welcome and entreated him fair. At first he dared not trust even the outward seeming of favour in return for his borrowed ducats. But soon he gained assurance. He grew in power as well as in hate. For always there were pious fools who cursed him for the taking of interest and always he had to witness the jeers, the blows, the shames with which his brethren of the poorer sort were daily stained and wounded. Often while he was on the way to a notary with a Christian civil enough to him, the man would stop to throw a stone at some cringing Hebrew by the wayside. And as time passed and Shylock, guided at first by Tubal, came to have correspondence with Jewish banking houses in Antwerp and Frankfurt and even in Muscovy, he learned by messenger and by letter concerning the wanderings and expulsions and woes of all Israel and chiefly of the horrors endured through the long years by those

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Marranos or secret Jews whom the cruel King and Queen of Spain had driven forth from their dominions. Hundreds, nay, thousands of these had been sold into slavery by the masters of the ships on which they fled and still, in those younger years of Shylock, moneys would be sent through him to ransom from Venice, the gate to all the East, an aged parent or once tender child who had languished long under the whip of some Berber chieftain or some pasha of Egypt or some *sheich* of Araby. Shylock had watched his hands grow crooked with grasping Christian gold and his heart grow sombre; he had turned from the study of the Law; he had learned to answer jeers with a cold falsely merry irony; whenever he had to bate his breath or whisper humbly or endure silently the reproach of perfidy, he treasured this sufferance in his bosom and it went more ill than ever with any debtor who broke his day or forfeited his bond.



T H E T H I R D C H A P T E R

OF OMENS AND FALSE DREAMS

*“Let not the sound of shallow foppery enter
My sober house.”*

MIDNIGHT had come and still Shylock sat without stirring in his chair. He had leaned back his head in its black silk cap; he had closed his eyes. Under that pale, high forehead with the bluish, hollowed temples of age, there was no quietude. His constant soul had held fast all accidents of fate and fortune, all shapes and aspects of his life, the flickering hopes, the harsh and long despair. The incessant memories haunted him; they streamed through his brain like flights of strong birds; he found that his old heart could still know ache. Not at once, in those years of his youth, had he grown wholly hard. For at that time a great tremor had gone through the soul of the world and thereafter a great hope. The bitter cup of Israel's sufferings had so overflowed that men could not doubt but what the Eternal, blessed be His name, would raise up a Redeemer for Zion. The tales that continued to

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come across land and sea concerning the exiles from Spain were tales to make a man slay himself with horror and pity. Such was the tale of those who paid great sums to the king of Portugal for the right of settlement and protection. But whether, as rumour had it, the sums were not great enough or whether the king's heart was merely evil, Portugal became a brazen furnace for these fugitives. And this was the most terrible of their unendurable woes: that the Portuguese took from them their men children and sent them in ships to those barren uninhabited isles of the sea which were called *islas perdidas* or lost islands. Many of these children died even on the ships that carried them and many of the others perished of hunger or were devoured by the beasts of land and sea and none were ever seen or heard of more by the parents that begat them. The reports of these things went by letter or by word of mouth from Jewish community to Jewish community and while these rang with mourning and with lamentation as though the Temple had been a second time destroyed, their Christian tormentors built great palaces and covered all walls with the glow of painting and wrought beautiful and festive things of precious metal and precious stone and made the lands to ring with the music of their madrigals and sonnets, their flutes and soft recorders, and swept past the gates of

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Jewish houses with torch-lit masque and silver revelry.

Shylock had prayed his psalms and ground his teeth and learned to harry his Christian debtors even while he fawned upon them and all the while had vibrated like a string upon the harp of David at the messages brought now from Rome and now from Bologna and now from otherwhere concerning that mysterious prince of a Jewish kingdom who had come from the unimaginable East, from beyond the river Sambatyon, to lead his people out of slavery into freedom. This man, who called himself David Reübeni had gone to the fierce King of Portugal saying: "I am a Hebrew and fear the Eternal, Master of the Heavens; my brother, the king of the Jews, has sent me to thee, great Lord and King, to ask thy help: Give us aid and we shall make war on Suleiman, the Turk, and tear the Holy Land from his grasp." This offer had whetted the appetite of that king and of other kings and of the Pope himself. David Reübeni had carried his grave erect person and his banners embroidered with the Ineffable Name to Rome and Avignon and the cities of Italy and everywhere the Marranos, the Jews whom the bloody Inquisition had forced into baptism, flocked with tears of hope and relief to the banners of David. Shylock, like many other shrewd men among his

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people, had doubted the pretensions of this princely person. Where was that far kingdom of the Jews? Caravans from beyond Babylon and the great rivers had brought no news of it. But in the year 5284, or 1524 according to the reckoning of the Gentiles, David Reübeni had come to Venice to treat with the Doge and the Council of Ten, who more than other Christian Lords dreaded and hated the Turkish Sultan, concerning the war that Israel set free was to wage, with Christian help, against the Moslem domination.

All night the people of the Ghetto had vibrated and thrilled and intoned psalms of thanksgiving or pledged each other in wine. The doubting elders who had seen hope rise faintly and vanish swiftly before and who had had secret messages from Rome concerning this David Reübeni, were disregarded. The writings of the Prophets were searched for mystic symbols foreshadowing Messianic happenings in this year and the lifting of the too heavy yoke. Shylock, though troubled by a deep inner doubt, had yielded himself to the fervour of hope; too sorely was the sacred nation beset; too deeply was he stirred by the prophetic vision, like Miriam's of old, that he saw burning in his mother's eyes. And hardly had the dawn come when the folk of the Ghetto in gondolas or deviously on foot made their way to the

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Piazza in front of the ducal palace and surged under the pointed arches or gazed up at the fretted balconies or, sedulously keeping their eyes from the impious Basilica behind, watched the light gather like a golden globe over the tranquil sea.

Halberdiers of the Signoria came and with levelled pikes drove the crowd backward from the palace. In two rows the men stationed themselves in front of the Porta della Carta and so the Jews knew how honourably their strange ambassador was to be received. The sun rose higher over the Hadrian sea and a Christian crowd began to gather too. But the Jews held their own and the Christians, though jeering a little at the notion of a Hebrew prince and ambassador, let them be. And soon in gondolas of state, gold-beaked and shaded with cloth of gold, the Doge himself had come, with members of the Council, with a train of magnificoes, with officers of the guards and officers from the following of the great Admiral and with scarlet-liveried blackamoors. The sombrely gorgeous procession had left their gondolas and crossed the square under the column of the winged lion and one could see them, passing through the Porta della Carta and slowly mounting the fretted marble stairway of the inner court. Shylock and his brethren had marked those hard, proud faces, the implacable faces of those who deem that power

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confers wisdom and is one with justice. Jewish heads bowed and Jewish lids quivered at the evil sight of these faces. With trembling expectancy they now waited for their representative, Messiah or not: for that strange *Sar* or Commandant, as he had caused himself to be called. And soon two dark gondolas came floating in from the Canale Grande and the figures in them gleamed and glittered under the light of the sun, for they were all robed and turbaned in white silk and so resembled a holy congregation dressed in its shrouds for the Day of Atonement. But when they left their gondolas it was seen that they were apparelled in the fashion of the East and that the *Sar* David and his companions had silver Shields of David sewn on their turbans which were wound in a manner different from the manner of the Moslems and that they carried short sabres at their sides which were also adorned with the Shield of David. And in front of the *Sar* walked an old man of priestly aspect carrying a great silver candelabrum of seven branches and on each side of the *Sar* walked a youth carrying a long trumpet of silver like the trumpets spoken of in the Torah. But of these things Shylock took little account. What his eyes sought was the face of the *Sar*; he burned to know what manner of man this was. He saw a long and thin face with a sparse, short, black beard; he saw heavy



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lids half-shut over large golden-brown eyes. He peered into those eyes, but they were the veiled eyes of a man who would not bear any reading in them; they were the eyes of a man of dreams and visions and to all such, Shylock knew, could come both doubt and fear. Nor did the *Sar* glance either to the right or to the left. He was tense like one who was gathering all his strength for a great trial and his skin was pale, like the skin of a man who had prepared himself for that trial by prayer and fasting. Shylock's heart had lost hope. He was not comforted by the curiously embroidered banners with legends in the sacred tongue. He took the arm of his mother who was weary and led her home.

But on that night the *Sar* Reübeni appeared in the synagogue before the congregation of the elders and, speaking in a scarce intelligible Hebrew and in equivocating phrases, told of that mighty Jewish Kingdom of Chabor over which his brother ruled and asserted that the Signoria had been at one with him in the plan of a great war that was to free the world from the yoke of the Moslems and restore Israel to its kingdom and rebuild the Temple of the Holy One, blessed be He, in its place. The elders wept, despite the man's strange aspect and stranger speech; they threw at his feet gold pieces and jewelled rings; the poor crowded forth to kiss the hem of his gar-

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ment. They blessed and embraced each other and spoke with a new meaning the immemorial words: "*L'shanah haba'a b'Yerushalaim*—next year in Jerusalem!" But Shylock in a dim corner of the synagogue had been minded to intone to himself some penitential psalm. The *Sar's* eyes had glowed now, in truth, but they had not looked straightly into the eyes of other men. He had spoken of great things in swelling speech, but he had said nothing concerning the measures by which these things were to be brought about. He had been aloof and wrapt and taken no man's hand and directly answered no man's question. And in the depth of his soul Shylock had known, though he was but a young man in those days, that this hope too would come to naught and that he had better address himself to the harsh necessities of the world.

But Reübeni and his dreams gave the Jews no rest; wave after wave of hope went forth from him as he wandered about the world and he gained one convert whose holiness and fervour stirred many whose hearts had grown weary. This was a man named Solomon Molcho, a Marrano or New Christian who had remained in Portugal after the disastrous persecutions of his people and had become one of the secretaries of the king. He met the *Sar* David and God touched his heart; he returned to the Eter-

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nal and to the faith of his fathers and caused himself to be circumcised. He studied the Law and the Writings; he came to Italy and persuaded Pope Clement to let him live openly as a Jew; he journeyed to the East and became an adept of the Kabbalah; he returned into Italy and discoursed before multitudes and such were his courage and sweetness and fervour that many who had lost faith in Reübeni found it again because of Rabbi Solomon. And it was the lot of Shylock to see these two meet in Venice six years after he had first seen Reübeni. They appeared in the synagogue and the *Sar* seemed shrunken and feverish; his white cloak seemed more than ever like a shroud. A fire had burned out in his soul and its burning had shrivelled up the body. It was the Rabbi Solomon Molcho who sustained the stricken hearts of Israel. For he discoursed not of war nor of conquest nor of violent liberation but with wisdom and persuasiveness bade his people endure and be holy and sanctify the Ineffable Name and thus storm the fortresses of the Eternal and bring the Messiah streaming down with his heavenly hosts. The people wept hearing him; Shylock wept with his brethren and went home comforted.

The next day on the Rialto there accosted him the learned Signior Ramusio, most cunning of all the Venetians in the tongues of the East. "Shylock," he

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said, "I am no enemy to your people and deplore their sufferings. Bid them have no faith in this Reübeni. At the command of the Signoria I was closeted with him for many hours yesterday and questioned him. There is no Hebrew kingdom of Chabor; the man is no villain and has not willingly practised imposture. He is crazed like some of our monks." Signior Ramusio winked an eye. "Madness and religion—each seems akin to the other. But go now; there is no need that we two be seen speaking together." Shylock had never forgotten that scene: the grave Ramusio in his black scholar's cloak in the sunlight of the Rialto; the husky voice with its undertone of irony; the words biting for all their suavity; his own immediate conviction of their truth. He had from that hour on sought to persuade his brethren to return to their sober ways and to rely on gold and favour and cunning to protect them from the cruelty of their foes. Since he was prospering he had joined the *Deputados dos Cautivos*, the Portuguese Society of the Merciful who ransomed the Jews captured on ships that crossed the sea—toilers and merchants and even scholars—and dragged into slavery on the foul isle of Malta. And two years passed and once more a rumour concerning Reübeni and Molcho filled the world. For these two had gone to Regensburg to plead with the Emperor

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Charles V concerning the liberation of their people. But the Emperor's court removing to Mantua, they had been dragged thither in chains and the Rabbi Solomon Molcho had been accused and tried by the priests as an apostate from Christianity and condemned to die at the stake. Yet that true *zadik*, that holy man, had touched even the stony heart of the emperor who, when Molcho was already gagged and bound to the stake, sent a messenger pleading with him to recant his Judaism. They took the gag from his mouth. He spoke with a loud voice: "My heart is sad and broken only over the days I lived in that false religion. Do with me as you will. My soul returns to the dwelling-place of its Father!" Enraged by those words the executioners thrust him into the flames whence sounded once more the voice of the Rabbi declaring, after the manner of Israel, the Unity of the Eternal with his last breath. Reübeni was dragged to Spain in the Emperor's train and there died in a dungeon. But his life had an evil aftermath. For the spies of the Inquisition were more subtile than ever in discovering the Jewish rites practised in secret by the Marranos in Spain and many good men and many gentle women were condemned to suffer death by fire on account of this David Reübeni and his dreams.

Once more not long thereafter Shylock had

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speech with the learned Ramusio. The Venetian came to the Ghetto and Shylock bade a manservant bring wine and fruit. Ramusio wanted a loan of three hundred ducats.

“Your pledge shall be the Roman statues recently discovered that I shall purchase with your Jewish gold. There is the torso of a Venus!”

He kissed his fingers and blew the kiss away. Suddenly he winked again as on that day in the sunshine on the Rialto.

“I am told of a rumour that a man of your nation has seen in the body that Rabbi Solomon Molcho who was done to death at Mantua.”

“Aye,” said Shylock, “there is such a rumour but I give it no credence.”

Signior Ramusio arose and signed the bond and slipped the ducats into his purse. He turned at the door.

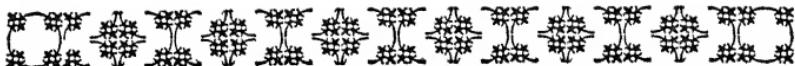
“When I consider that Rabbi’s last words as reported and now this rumour I cannot but be reminded of the fate of another Rabbi of your people who was done to death over fifteen hundred years ago.” The learned Signior laughed. “You will not turn this one into a god, will you?”

Shylock had looked into Ramusio’s eyes: “It is not we, good Signior, who turned the other into a

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god. But you have made us pay a great price for your credulity."

His voice, as he thought later, must have been harsher than he knew. For Ramusio had almost fled and soon thereafter had repaid the loan with proper interest and sought him out no more.



T H E F O U R T H C H A P T E R

OF HIS FINDING SERVICE

"It was my turquoise; I had it of Leah when I was a bachelor."

HE KNEW not, the old man alone in the night, how it came to pass that all the dead years and days arose in his soul as though their voices were not hushed nor their sun extinguished. But it came over him that it had been a mild day of spring, that day on which Signior Ramusio had come for gold wherewith to buy Roman statues. From that scene with the Venetian, which had tasted bitter on his tongue, Shylock had gone into an inner chamber where his ageing mother had sat over her embroidery-frame. On scarlet silk she was setting a golden lion of Judah. Her eyes were still keen and her hands agile. He had stridden up and down and she had told him gently that they had been bidden forth by a messenger to be, on the approaching *Seder* night, the first festive night of the Passover, the guests of the rich and learned Rabbi Naphtali Ashkenazi. She had lowered her eyes over her frame, but Shylock

Of His Finding Service

had known what was in her mind. It was not seemly for a man in Israel to be unwedded and to have given his mother no grandchildren in his thirtieth year. And Ashkenazi had a daughter named Leah who, like that Mother Leah aforetime, had tender eyes. Nor could Shylock well have told why he had been so laggard in fulfilling his duties as a man in Israel. He had seen more than one maiden who had briefly stirred his heart. Perhaps he had felt more deeply than his brethren the menace of life in exile, its peacelessness and insecurity. Perhaps he had nursed a deeper hope than he had known since that first landing of David Reübeni in Venice more than eight years ago. That hope was dead; those dreams were over. The duty of increasing Israel remained.

On the *Seder* night the gates of the Ghetto were securely chained and bolted. At the prayer of the elders of the community, moreover, both these gates and the approach to the Ghetto from the side of the sea were closely guarded by halberdiers and pike-men of the Signoria. For Easter and Passover fell on nigh the same date that year and the season, like all such seasons, was one of great danger to the Jews. Not in Venice but both in Rome and Genoa the vile Dominican monks had harangued the rabble, repeating the hoary and stupid lie that the Jews used Christian blood for the baking of their unleavened

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bread. So it needed but in any city that some Christian child was late coming home or that some youth should flee from a too harsh parent for the idle and vicious and lecherous of flesh or gold to rush madly to the Ghetto and destroy and rob and violate and slay. The Signoria had willingly sent its guardsmen and these had been promised gifts by the Jewish community. But more often than not when danger came the Christian soldiers would make common cause with their own and refuse to risk their skins for those whom they had heard the priests in the Good Friday mass call "the perfidious Jews." And so in the Ghetto under the festive joy of the people there vibrated a little tremor of fear.

Of that fear no eye could have beheld any sign at the great tables of the Rabbi Naphtali Ashkenazi. Half a hundred candles in candelabra and in sconces gave a soft light that was reflected back from the silver cups and the pewter platters that were never used except during the Passover. At the long, lower table sat poor men and strangers, homeless Portuguese wanderers with the delicate hands and well-cut features of their kind, Levantines in white turbans from Stamboul and in black from Tunis, and a few men in long, black coats and fur-trimmed hats from Muscovy. At the head of the upper table, nobly propped up with embroidered pillows sat the

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Rabbi Ashkenazi with his wife and the mother of Shylock on either side; Shylock and the maiden Leah sat side by side and farther down a few chosen kinsmen and kinswomen. And the festive ritual commenced and the wine warmed all hearts and more than the wine the exalted thought of the fellowship of Israel throughout the ages. The *Matzoth*, the cakes of unleavened bread, were broken: "Behold the bread of poverty that our fathers ate in the land of Mizrayim! Whoever is hungry, let him come and eat; whoever suffereth thirst, let him come and celebrate the *Pesach* with us. This year here, next year in the land of Israel; this year bond-servants, next year freemen!" Across the years, across the strange and turbulent years Shylock could see that glow of candlelight, could hear that voice and the voices of the responses, could see the lace about the sweet young throat of Leah beside him. With what joyous fervour the great passages of the ritual had been chanted. Had some of that fervour gone out of Israel in later days? Had the times been too evil and the yoke too heavy? Or was it only he who had grown old and hard? How he could hear the voices of that far-off evening: "Therefore stood HE by our fathers and by us, because it was not only a single one that arose against us in order to bring us to naught; but in each new generation do they

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arise against us to destroy us and the Holy One, blessed be He, snatches us from their hands!" After that passage there had been no more fear. All hearts had been filled with love and faith and joy. He and Leah had now begun to speak to each other and soon he had touched her hand and they had both laughed, as they had done in their childhood, over the quaint, immemorial allegory that ends the ritual: the allegory concerning God who came and slew the Angel of Death that had slain the butcher that had slaughtered the ox that had drunk the water that had quenched the fire that had burned the stick that had beaten the dog that had bit the cat that had devoured the kid which the father had bought for two Sus! The kid, the kid! "*Chad Gadya! Chad Gadya!*" They had laughed with a young glee and under the consenting eyes of Leah's parents and of his mother he had kissed the maiden's white unfurrowed brow.

The old man's heart gave a quick throb. Whatever he left behind him in his flight, he must not forget the *Ketubba*, the marriage contract which a gifted scribe late come to Venice from Citadella had written and illuminated for him and Leah. It lay at the bottom of yonder oaken chest, its strong and beautiful colours dead in the darkness. But he could see it with his mind's eye: Above the fair, harmonious figures of Adam and Eve under the tree, smack-

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ing perchance a little too much of the art of the heathen, but topped by garlands of fruits and flowers held by Cherubim. Below this picture were square within square, like frame within frame, richly and intricately and curiously wrought into a pattern of leaves and wreaths, the wreaths being lozenge-shaped and held by Cherubim; and in the centre of each wreath the cunning artist had depicted some scene from the lives of the Arch-fathers and mothers as related in the books of the Torah. Within the middle of these concentric frames was set the Hebrew writing that had made one of them who had been twain. And in all truth, they had been done, these twain, during the few years that had been granted them. Considering now how few those years had been and how troubled and how the only child that God had given them had shown so wayward a heart and was now out in the heathen world denying father and mother, faith and folk and home, a sob rose from the chest of the old man and lodged in his throat and stayed there with a hard, dry ache. How like a flower Leah had been, and how like a delicate flower she had not been strong enough to withstand the blasts of the world.

She had been with child during the second year of their marriage, when of a sudden most evil news had come by letters and by messengers to the holy congregations of Venice and Naples and Genoa. The

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summer was heavy with great heat in that year 5295 which was the year 1535 in the reckoning of the nations. With a huge fleet and army the Emperor Charles had marched against the city of Tunis in Barbary and that white city fell and was shorn of its splendour. The Christians were without mercy toward either Moslem or Jew. But the Jews, of whom a great community dwelled in Tunis, fared hardest. Thousands were massacred at once with their women and children. Only when the arms of the butchers grew weary did others, carrying what they might of their goods, flee southward and eastward into the desert. There they were consumed by hunger and thirst and reduced to the last extremity of human misery and despoiled by the Arabs of the waste places. After a little the Christians, seeing a more profitable way than slaughter, hunted the Jews and captured them and sold them into slavery, men and women and children, to slavers from far and diverse lands, caring not whether husband was parted from wife or child from parent. And to all the communities of the Levant and of Italy the venerable Rabbi Abraham of Tunis sent forth these words: "In some places the earth has swallowed our people, in others the sword has slain them, in still others they have died of hunger and thirst! But it is the decree of God and though He slay me, yet will I trust Him."

Of His Finding Service

Shylock and his brethren had strained their means to the uttermost to ransom the Jews sold into slavery. They had denied themselves wine and fruit, repose and coolness. The women had given their jewels to be sold and their raiment to clothe the naked. And soon into every harbour of Italy, but chiefly into Venice and Naples, had poured the redeemed slaves of Tunis, wounded, distracted, tattered, stricken in body and soul, seeking those they loved. Mothers wailed for their children who had died or who had not yet been ransomed; holy men fell into a terrible sickness, because they had starved themselves for so long, refusing to eat the unclean food of the heathen. Meanwhile a great still heat stood, like a fiery column, over Venice and a foul miasma arose from the shallow sea and the shrinking lagoons. A pestilence set in and this was a double danger. For the Jews, draining their meats of blood, eating no raw viands, holding swine's flesh in abhorrence, suffered less from the ravages of the pestilence than Christians, which caused the latter more than ever to hate them as strangers, as sorcerers, as blood-brothers to the Devil himself. Yet life was all but insupportable in the narrow Ghetto alleys thronged with fugitives, and Shylock thought that he could almost number across the years the stabs of terror in his heart as he had seen Leah grow more wan of cheek and feeble

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of limb day by day and yet not desist from the care of the outcast, the widow and the fatherless. At last her strength had wholly failed; for many weeks she had been tormented by a searing fever; the child she carried under her heart had been lost. Never again had she recovered the bloom of youth and health; not until eleven years later had she given Shylock the girl Jessica, their only child. And soon thereafter he had been left lonely, mourning both his aged mother and the wife of his youth.

Meanwhile, despite affliction and persecution, gold had flowed into his coffers. The year after the disastrous Tunisian war and the summer of the great sickness, he had been summoned by night to the house of Ashkenazi, his father-in-law. A messenger had come from Lyons in the realm of King Henry II of France. It was a smooth-faced, dark-locked youth in elegant Spanish attire, puffed breeches, plumed hat, sleeves of white lawn projecting from a brocaded doublet, whom Shylock had found in his father-in-law's closet. A Gentile, surely. The youth had even doffed his hat. But with a twinkle in his eye the Rabbi Ashkenazi repeated the greeting of welcome: "*Baruch haba*—blessed be he who comes!" And the youth answered: "*Baruch hayoshev*—blessed be he who dwells here." The Rabbi Naphtali had bidden the youth repeat his tale to Shylock as

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to a younger and stronger man who could bear the burden of great affairs. The youth had spoken with a gravity and wisdom that were beyond his years. He was an emissary from Don Juan Miguez who had lately come out of Portugal to be at the head of the Lyons branch of the great banking house of Mendes of Lisbon. The King of France had needed huge loans and had turned for moneys to the Lyons house. But that was not the only reason why Don Juan or, better, João Miguez had come out of Portugal. The youth lowered his voice. Fiercer and more subtile from day to day became the spies of the Inquisition; apostates and informers—may their names be blotted out—coiled like serpents in all places. Men knew no longer where to turn nor whom to trust. Neither wealth nor splendour nor high birth nor service to the state availed any longer. And therefore Don João had been sent forth by his young widowed aunt, Donna Grazia Mendesia, who now controlled the fortunes of the house, to spy out the lands of earth even as Joshua had aforetime sent spies into the land of Cana'an. For the heart and the hearts of all her kin were sore and weary with the foul hypocrisy forced upon them under the threat of exile and fire and slavery; weary even unto death of seeming to be Christians and children of the Church. The youth's eyes glowed with a sombre fire.

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“I have heard Donna Grazia say, and saying this she seemed beautiful with a fiery beauty even like Miriam, the sister of Moses, our teacher—I have heard her say that the yoke would not be so bitter to bear if one could find in the world but one action of the sort that the Christians called Christian, but that all Christendom was a seething cauldron of cruelty and of war and of hate and of persecution, of slaughtering the innocent and selling the defenceless into slavery. At first she had had some hope in that heretic monk of Wittenberg, Martinus Luther, who had even written a broadside to declare to all the world that the God of the Christians had been born a Jew. Later had come sure messages and certain news that the false monk had spoken so only in the hope that the Jews would become of his religion. Seeing that hope vain he was beginning to burn with a rage against them as implacable as the rage of the old Church itself. Therefore Donna Grazia and her kindred have given up all hope in Christendom. Rather would they dwell in tents in desert places, practising their religion freely, rejoicing in Israel and its God, than gather in palaces in Portugal or France or Italy the ransom of kings or the gold of the Indies.” The youth had ceased speaking. He had regarded Shylock earnestly. “A trusted agent is needed in Venice, the port of the East. Rabbi Moses

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Hamon, the body physician of the Sultan Suleiman, has inclined his master's heart, as his father did before him, toward our people. Will you stand us? Shall I know your answer now?" Shylock with a great burning in his heart had accepted that service. And now the young messenger revealed further things. Donna Grazia with her young daughter Reyna and a following of kinsmen and servitors was even now on the way to Antwerp in the Spanish Netherlands. The Emperor himself being a debtor of the house of Mendes, they had been permitted to go freely. But Donna Grazia had registered an oath in heaven to continue to dwell neither there nor elsewhere in Christendom unless she could openly return to the faith of her fathers and to the praise of *El Chai*, the living God. The family had a secret promise from the Emperor; they had the good will of princes and princesses. But they would count all that as of no avail, unless a little sooner or later they could live openly as Israelites and openly bring succour to the poor and oppressed of the house of Jacob. The youth now gave Shylock particular instructions and sureties, and from that hour on he had been the Venetian agent of the house of Mendes and later of the house of Nassi.

The hard ache melted in the old man's throat. He rose in the dark night from his chair to refresh

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himself with a sip of wine. God never wholly deserted His people, heavy as were their sins. For what would he do now, had he not been the servant and friend of those great hearts, of that holy and indomitable house of Princes in Israel? Let them come and drag him to the baptismal font; let them mock and revile him, as they were never weary of mocking and reviling his sacred nation. There was even now in the harbour a caravel of cedarwood, which would not spread sail for its voyage down the hoarse Hadrian sea and eastward to the sunny Bosphorus until he gave the command. Unless they walled him in a dungeon, he would soon be free. He went to the window; he raised his arms in thanksgiving to the heavens; the weariness forsook his old frame a little. He had had his share in things good and great. The years had marched with a swifter tread since that day on which he had had speech with the messenger in the house of the Rabbi Naphtali, peace be upon him. He had lent moneys to the Venetians only as an outward show or in the hope of crushing some foe more bitter or some informer more dangerous than others. He had shipped cargoes eastward that were more precious than spice or amber or cinnamon; he had ransomed more slaves than all the holy congregations of Venice and Naples. For Donna Grazia burned with an unquenchable zeal for

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her people and an ever more passionate need to expiate the years during which she had still to endure the dishonour of a life outwardly false to her faith. For her hopes had perished. The spies of the Inquisition swarmed no less in Antwerp than in Lisbon. The Emperor, reminded of his secret word, had harshly threatened confiscation if the house of Mendes relapsed into Judaism. Diego Miguez, the older brother of João, had been dragged before a tribunal, accused of the crime of "secret Judaizing." He had been thrown into prison despite the protestation of the Magistrates of Antwerp who pleaded in the defense of Diego Miguez the great profit brought to the city by the "New Christians," the honourableness and loyalty of all their dealings, the great danger that would accrue to the city if these bankers and importers were driven into the countries of the infidel Turk. Envy and malevolence, the Syndics declared, had been the motives of the accusation. The good sense of the Flemish burghers availed little against the hot bigotry and greed of the Church and the Emperor. Even after Diego's sudden and too early death the Emperor caused the Holy Office to repeat the charge of Judaizing and relapse against him. Only a huge loan extended to the imperial court without interest by the house of

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Mendes saved Donna Grazia and her daughter and her kin from the dungeons of the Inquisition.

Shylock remembered the services he had rendered in those troubled and uncertain years to his noble mistress. He had sent and received the letters that passed between Donna Grazia and Don Joāo and the Rabbi Moses Hamon, who had the ear and favour of the Grand Sultan. He had discovered a pious youth of Salonika who, having the player's mimic gift as well as the gift of many tongues, could pass through all lands, now disguised as a priest, now as a Moslem. Deep in the folds of this youth's turban he had dispatched to Suleiman the Magnificent an emerald without flaw weighing thirty carats which the brother of Donna Grazia's husband had sent home to Spain from the newly discovered Indies of the West. He had been among the three hundred knights that crossed the monstrous Cordilleras with Pizarro. He had died in those mountain passes, declaring the Unity of Israel's God. But his young page, a fervent secret Jew like himself, had brought home a leather purse full of strange gold and precious jewels. At last had come the year of the flight of Donna Grazia and her kin and her followers and servitors. Strange rumours had been knowingly spread. It was Shylock who had written the letter from Venice falsely accusing Don Joāo

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Miguez of having stolen and brought thither Reyna, the daughter of Donna Grazia, whose beauty and wealth were coveted by many knights and nobles of the imperial court. It was upon the receipt of this letter from her Venetian agent that Donna Grazia had feigned to fall ill and had prayed for permission to seek the healing waters of Aix-la-Chapelle. And it was now that, through a Christian debtor, Shylock had bought a palace facing the lagoon in the Piazzetta hard by the giant statues that guard the Zecca, where the Republic struck its coins, for the princely and most Christian lady Beatrice Da Luna and her train.

He had not dared to meet and bid her welcome. Days had passed before, under the pretext of having for sale an ape in a cage of ivory late brought from beyond the shores of Araby the Blest, he had presented himself in his saffron Jew's hat at the gate of the palace in the Piazzetta. A serving-woman feigned laughingly at a window to espy the Jew and his curious burden. A servitor summoned him. He found himself at last face to face with the lady Mendesia. She was tall and of a mature beauty, a stern and severe beauty; her heavily coiled black hair was streaked with white. She had on, he remembered well, a dark green robe heavily embroidered with gold in the Spanish fashion with an

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edge of fine lace at the collar. She wore no jewels except her marriage ring fashioned in the traditional manner by a Jewish goldsmith but not recognizable by the heathen. She came toward him with outstretched hands: "*Baruch haba!*" she said gravely. "*Baruch hayoshev,*" he returned her blessing. She had sat down and bidden him be seated and thanked him for his faithful services. She had framed her face in her long white hands and he remembered how eloquent were the tips of her fingers pressed thus against her temples. Shylock, being a close reckoner, knew that the lady was in her fortieth year. Yet never had he seen the heart of youth beat higher. Her eyes were unafraid. The horrors they had beheld, the tears they had shed had not dismayed or darkened them. "Good Shylock," she said, "I have not long to wait here, nor will not. They may yet clap me into their dungeons under the Doge's palace, for I know that spies followed us all the way and I know that in my very household are disloyalty and dissension. But if I am free and a ship can be found I shall go and on the very deck of that ship within sight of this accursed shore I shall bid the men of my train put on their praying-shawls and bind on their phylacteries!"

Shylock had bowed. "There will be millions of



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money left in the grasp of the *Goyim* if you go too soon.”

She sprang up. “I know they will rob us when we return to the faith of our fathers. But on what pretext will they not rob us or shame or smite or burn us?” She stretched out her arms. “The evil impulse rules them. I know not why. I have known among them men and women who were courteous, brave, generous. But the very thought of us—again I know not why—made them cruel, faithless, lecherous, not to be trusted or believed.” She dropped her arms; she sat down again and leaned forward. Marvellous upon her lips sounded the holy tongue: “*Zame’ah nafshi l’elohim, l’el chai*—my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God!”

A door hidden by hangings had suddenly opened. Disguised as a servitor appeared Don João Miguez. Once or twice before Shylock had seen that tall form with its slow deliberate movements, that face which seemed tranquil but was only disciplined, that severe brow, those eyes too early consumed by thought. He greeted Shylock. “How much have we transferred to Salonika and Constantinople?”

“Nine millions of ducats in gold and precious stones. There are also the bonds signed by the Emperor and the King of France.”

Don João shrugged his shoulders. “They will not

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repay to Jews what they will feign, well knowing our minds and hearts, to have borrowed from Christians. But I have seen the Sultan's ambassador to the Signoria. The reasoning of Rabbi Hamon has prevailed. Suleiman will protect us." He turned to his aunt. "We shall need the protection. Monks and Christian merchants are besieging the Doge and the Ten: they plead that we intend to 'relapse' to Judaism and should therefore be handed over to the Holy Office."

Donna Grazia smiled. "That hoary trick. But if the Sultan protects us, it will avail them little."

Once more Don João had turned to Shylock. "You will consent to stay in Venice and serve us further, good friend?"

"The *Kever avot*, the grave of my fathers, is here," he had answered.

Don João had taken his hand. "It is well for us that you will remain here and serve us. But I prophesy that the day will come when all Israelites will abandon the graves of their fathers and set their faces to the East."

In Shylock's ears rang across time the resonance of that voice, speaking those mystic words. Messages had come to him not long ago that his master, now no more João Miguez, but the great Jewish prince and chief councilor of the Sultan, Joseph Nassi, had

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clung to his belief and to his vision. He had obtained from Suleiman, his lord, the grant of the city of Tiberias and of seven villages on the shores of Lake Kinereth of the land of Israel in order to found cities of refuge, cities of their own for the dispersed and oppressed and harried of the house of Jacob. Once more at his window in the night Shylock turned his eyes to the heavens. Aye, now it would be his turn to leave the graves of his fathers, childless, in disgrace with fortune and with his own soul. Morning would come and the accursed Christians would be upon his track to drag him to apostasy and shame. He lifted his hands. Though all the sages of Israel forbade hatred, his heart was bitter against the enemy. It had been bitter long; perchance the great bitterness had entered into him on the day after that first meeting with Donna Grazia Mendesia. For on that evil day the message had been brought him that she had already been taken prisoner in her palace and was even now in a dungeon deep in the earth under the prison beyond the Ponte dei Sospiri. He had seen her intrepid beauty in his mind's eye. He had seen her white flesh cut by rusty chains and it had seemed to him as though his very head must split with the exceeding horror of that vision and of his own powerlessness. He had run with cloak flying and saffron hat

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awry and the urchins of the street jeering in his train to the palace on the Piazzetta, hoping to obtain speech with Don João. But the house had been dumb and blind. No door nor window had opened to his knocking. And suddenly it had come to him with sharp terror that his knocking so wildly at the gate would but increase the jeopardy of his noble mistress. He had slunk back to the Ghetto. He had paced up and down in his private chamber; he had gnawed his lips until blood stained his beard.

Not until night had any news reached him. A woman selling onions had clamoured for the master of the house. Angrily he had come down the stairs. Her clamour had ceased; she had come close to him. "Treachery was suspected long ago," she whispered in his ear; "the wise Hamon has not been idle. A galley, bearing a special envoy from Constantinople to the Signoria, is even now laboring up the Hadrian sea. The master bids you be tranquil."

Thereupon he had gone to rest. But dreams of Donna Grazia in prison, tortured in the dank and dark by toads and writhing serpents had haunted him until dawn. And these dreams had been so sharp and clear that they had remained in his memory like visions once truly seen with the eye of the flesh. Early in the morning he had risen and gone to the Rialto in the hope of either rumour or certain news.

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To the Piazzetta he had not dared to go. In a shady corner almost under the bridge of the Rialto he had met Don João still disguised as a Christian serving-man. He had drawn forth some baubles as though to sell them to the fellow. Don João had spoken, moving his lips as little as may be. "The *Bailo*, the ambassador of the Sultan, has raised sharp protest. She is not in irons. The special envoy should be here in four days. The Signoria will not resist. We shall seek security with Ercole d'Este of Ferrara. He has invited us."

He had gone home with a light heart. He, too, had sometimes half-dreamed of going to Ferrara, for the Duke Ercole, whom the priests hated, had long offered an asylum to the Marranos hounded by the Inquisition from place to place. The astute Duke's city had doubled in population and wealth. He permitted the New Christians to return openly to their religion, to build houses of prayer and study and to print books in the holy language. Alone among the minor princes of Italy, the Duke of Ferrara had no need of dealing with money-lenders. His splendour was secure. Nevertheless Shylock had said to himself that the freedom of Ferrara was a precarious and a passing thing. If the debonair Duke were to overeat or overdrink one day and die thereof, men and women, wise men and poets would not

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escape the fury of the priests lying in wait and corrupting even now the heart of the Duke's young son. Ercole, may he live to a hundred, was no Messiah.

Yet had Shylock rejoiced and given a feast to his kinsmen and friends when, at the time of the next new moon, Donna Grazia and all her train, carrying all their goods, had been permitted to set out for Ferrara where, on the next Passover, she and her house publicly celebrated as Jews the great feast of Israel's liberation from bondage and gave ten thousand ducats and the worth of several precious jewels to the poor, the persecuted and the learned.

From now on for more than two years Shylock had journeyed thrice in every year to Ferrara and had been the guest of the house of Mendes. For the negotiations with the Sultan and the transference of wealth to the East continued. Donna Grazia and Don João had no more faith than Shylock in the abiding peace of an Italian city. Rather did they seek to bring thither for a later exodus noble souls still caged in the iron furnace of Portugal or at the mercy of spies and informers whether at Rome or in Flanders. Yet they neglected no immediate duty and Donna Grazia, in the words of the learned Abraham Usque, showed "the piety of Miriam, the wisdom of Deborah, the devotion of Esther and the courage of Judith." Thus Shylock saw her there; thus he saw

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her through the years with those burning eyes of hers that stayed forever young, with those long delicate hands that were never weary of deeds of faith and mercy, with that tall, graceful form that seemed to burn like a flame toward the house of Jacob and its God. And when one day a Turkish caravel, flying the pennants of Suleiman the Magnificent, with orange sails and gilded prow came to Ancona to receive Donna Grazia and her daughter and Don João and his kinsmen and five hundred others of the flower of Israel, the light had seemed to Shylock to fade from the sky and peace and beauty from the very Sabbath. He had been glad with all his heart when Don João, publicly resuming his faith, had become Joseph Nassi and keeper of the Sultan's treasury; when the word came of the temples and schools and printing houses established by Donna Grazia in Constantinople and of the marriage of Joseph Nassi to his young kinswoman Reyna, destined in her turn to become a princess and benefactress in Israel. He had been glad. But on the land in which he dwelt more evil days than ever seemed to come with the faring forth of his friends and patrons, days more dreadful and desperate for him and all his tribe.



T H E F I F T H C H A P T E R

OF REMEMBERED FLAMES

“If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you poison us, do we not die?”

HE LOOKED at the heavens no more; he strode up and down no more; a great weakness came upon him. He faltered to the divan in the darkness and stretched out his aching body. He closed his eyes and saw suddenly again, he knew not why, the great hall of the Doge's palace with its painted walls and ceiling in which he had been defeated and put to shame the day before. He saw again the Doge's face, sly under its stern and self-righteous aspect, the self-pitying mien of Antonio, different enough from the cold ferocity of the merchant's usual demeanour. “I am as like to spit on thee again!” He heard again those intolerable words; he heard the brazen jeering laughter of Gratiano in the hollow hall of justice; he saw again the smooth, empty, handsome face of Bassiano, prodigal, adventurer and gambler who cozened himself and his friends with fine, round, fluent words.

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He hated them. Aye, contrary to all the commands of the sages, contrary to the command of the Eternal, blessed be His Name, he hated them. He hated them for their brutal and unseeing hearts. He was to them an object of sport and scorn. They knew well enough, none better, what he and his people had had to endure. Antonio had not forgotten, not he, the informer's fee that he had taken twelve years before; the Doge Marc-Antonio Trevisano had not forgotten that dreadful *auto-da-fé* in the great Piazza. Had he not sat on a high seat in front of the Basilica the while the holy books, comfort and instruction of Israel's exile, were burned by the brutal grimy executioners. *Auto-da-fé*—act of faith! Faithless they were and brutish and cruel. Shylock clenched his fists. Alas, they were old and feeble. The Duke had bidden him, him be merciful. When had they ever rendered mercy? The foul command to search out and destroy the sacred books had first come from the impious Pope at Rome. There, on the Campo dei Fiore on *Rosh ha-shana*, on the New Year, of all days, the books had first been burned. Up and down the land thereafter went the Dominican monks howling that in the Talmudic books Christ and his Mother were insulted and their sacred hearts pierced with new swords, that the spilling of Christian blood was commanded therein and the

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oppression of Christians by usury and likewise the stealing and piercing and defiling of the holy wafer in the Host which was, as all the world knew, the suffering body of the Lord and bled when it was pierced. So the burnings had spread over the land and the books, the staff and stay of Israel in exile, had been burned in Bologna and Mantua and Milan.

He half raised himself from his divan, stung by the old rage and the old horror. "Swine!" he muttered. Except the lords and nobles and priests among them, few can read at all. The common priest himself can read no more than his breviary. And the magnificoes and few scholars read chiefly the lecherous writings of the old idolaters of Greece and Rome. What did they know of the reading of the poor Hebrew who, hounded from place to place, wearing out his wounded feet in search of a crust for wife and child, retires into the holy books as into a refuge and dreams that he is sitting with councillors and wise men of old, sharing their wisdom, contributing to their decisions, outcast and spurned no more but free and wise in the land of his fathers or in the academes of Babylon where still a Jewish *Gaon* ruled the hearts and a Jewish Exilarch the bodies of a remnant of the people. And the thoughts of this matter had so fired his mind that when the imminent danger of the confiscation of the

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books had come closer and closer to Venice, he had offered to go alone to the Doge, to whom he had access, since two of the Council of Ten were heavily in his debt and in the debt of the house of Mendes. With shame he remembered that day even as with shame more burning still and bitter he remembered that much nearer day on which, in an open street, he had bared his heart to those two unfeeling and stupid *Goyim*, Salanio and Salarino. "Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?" Ha! He might have spared his breath. But he had been wrought upon by Jessica's treachery and lovelessness. His own flesh and blood, the daughter of Leah!

He sank back. That sudden burning in his chest, that sudden passionate certainty that he could change the world and burn it clean of its dross, had come to him too in that day now far and he had bidden his debtors gain him an audience with Trevisano. They had acceded and on a late afternoon, admitted by a small side door into the ducal palace, he had been led into a narrow, lofty chamber in which sat the Doge Marc-Antonio Trevisano. He had gazed upon that long, dark, handsome, severe face. He had clasped his hands. He had felt for a moment the flame of a prophet within him. He pleaded first for an examination of the Talmudic and Midrashic

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volumes by learned men in order to prove that they contained none of the things which the monks feigned or which a few apostates had forged. He besought the Duke to write to Antwerp to Daniel Bomberg, the great Christian printer who during his earlier years in Venice had first imprinted the Babylonian Talmud and knew all that was written therein. The Doge had not moved; no change had come upon that stern, handsome visage. Shylock had stretched out his hands: "It is the truth that I speak. Do you not feel it? Do you not perceive it? And when the Jew is driven forth from his home or stripped of his goods or even robbed of the children he has begotten, he still has his wisdom and his dreams and the words of his sages and the story of a better life in a better age in these books. Would you rob a beggar of his only rag or a blind man of his staff or a sick man of a draught of physic or a wounded man of a surgeon's care or a mother of swaddling-clothes for her infant? We yearn for a land of our own and have none; for fields to till and are imprisoned in foul alleys; for better harvests to reap than this barren one of a little gold, for the ruined Temple of the Eternal, our God, and the freedom of our Kingdom. How would it please your Highness to be in danger of expulsion and shame and the hangman and the constables of the Holy

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Office and have no house or refuge, nor horse to ride, nor great church to pray in, nor garden of flowers nor repose nor refreshment? Our books are all we have. Be charitable, as your prophet, the Nazarite, bade you!"

He thought he had seen the straight lip of the Doge open a little; he thought he had seen a cloud come over those proud, hard eyes. He thought that the tall form in the scarlet robe bordered with ermine had bowed if by but the breadth of a hair. The right hand with its great emeralds and rubies had surely trembled. Yet was there silence, stony silence when he had finished. He had stood there, his eyes upon the Doge, waiting, praying, sure for a moment that under the gold medallion on that breast there beat a human heart. But the harsh voice when it was raised, the voice that was not the voice of one man speaking to another but the voice of parchment making a proclamation to slaves—this voice had maddened him so that he felt as though he must kill or be killed on the instant. "We cannot oppose the dictates of Our Mother, the Church, which speaks through the mouth of his Holiness. To examine your books would seem to doubt the verity of the Church's word. For your sufferings you have a remedy; you have but to embrace the only true faith to which the dispersion and suffering of your

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people itself bears witness. Our clemency was stretched to the utmost when three years ago we revoked the decree of expulsion of all your tribe from Venice."

"Under threat of the Sultan!" The words had leaped from Shylock's lips ere he had been well aware thereof. A trembling had come upon him. He had always wondered why he had not been dragged instantly to the deepest dungeon of the Republic. Perhaps the Doge had seen behind him the shadows of the Sultan and the Sultan's councillors. So the Doge had but lifted a weary, white, jewelled hand and pointed to the door. Conducted by a halberdier into the antechamber Shylock had presently found himself in the purple and orange dusk of the Piazza. He had failed. His brethren were waiting for him in the synagogue. He had, indeed, done a little good. The people were warned and thus a few books were buried in oaken chests by night and a few were given into the keeping of Christian servants.

Not many days thereafter the constables of the Republic and of the Holy Office had broken into the Ghetto Nuovo. Dominican monks, brandishing crucifixes, had led them. From house to house had they gone and from the certainty with which they sought out the libraries of the most learned, it was to be seen that they had been well instructed. A serving-

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man of Tubal confessed that, ignorant of the reason, he had not hesitated to answer the questions of a follower of Signior Antonio who said that his master professed a great desire to know concerning the wisdom of the Jews and who were their most learned men here in Venice. Thus over three thousand volumes had been gathered by the monks and their soldiers and had been shovelled into filthy carts, and in truth the soldiers, having been well paid and being a little drunk, had not spared first to make game of the writings of the sages, playing at ball with books, tearing out pages with immoderate laughter, not unmixed with superstitious fear, at the square Hebrew letters, going beyond their instructions and destroying or defiling books of prayer and beautifully illuminated Esther *Megilot* or scrolls for the feast of Purim and stealing the cases of silver filigree work in which many of these scrolls were kept. And men and women and even children wept over the shame and the despoilment and when the robbers left there was to be seen the pitiful sight of men, especially of the old and venerable, gathering according to their custom in the house of study and standing or sitting there with empty hands, twice exiled and desolate. And two days thereafter in that terrible month of *Mar Cheshvan* the *auto-da-fé* of the books was carried out in the middle of the Piazza. The Jewish

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community kept itself behind closed doors. But a strong impulse drew Shylock forth from his house and from the Ghetto. He had wrapped himself in a black cloak; he hid himself in the shadow of an arch. He saw the scaffold and the holy books upon it in a great heap; he saw the straw and the bundles of kindling wood; he saw far beyond on their high seats the Doge and the Cardinal each surrounded by magnificos, priests, pikemen. He heard from afar faintly the voice of a Dominican monk read the sentence and the malediction condemning to the flames the impious writings of the stubborn and perfidious Jews.

The hangmen mounted the scaffolding with torches of pine. At first there was to be heard a crackling and to be seen a thin column of black smoke coming from the straw and for one strange, incredible moment Shylock had almost believed in a miracle. But a keen wind of autumn came blowing in from the sea and the mass of books burst into flames, jagged red flames, flaglike flames with blue centres, flames stretched by the wind into orange and scarlet streamers, flames that now roared and hissed. And all about the scaffolding and the flames surged a multitude, some jeering, some singing, but some also praying. And near him under the arches Shylock beheld an old woman kneeling. Her worn, oval face was beautiful with tenderness; she must be, he

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thought, the good mother of children; in her dark, peaceful eyes were only the spirits of pity and of prayer. He had softly gone close to her and whispered: "What think you, good mother, of the burning of the books?" She had not turned, but had answered softly: "I am praying even now for those poor Hebrews that they may forget their wicked blasphemies and be brought to believe in our Lord and his blessed Mother." Shylock had drawn back into the deeper shadow and making his way from arch to arch of the Procuratie Vecchie had sought the narrow lagoon behind and, dropping into the gondola that had brought him, had gone home. His head had been bowed and his heart seething with bitterness. The world needed a change; the Eternal, blessed be He, needed to be assaulted and the very gates of heaven to be stormed daily and nightly by the prayers of his people, since not only the hearts of the rapacious and the false but the hearts of the good and the simple were turned against Israel. Why? Why? he had asked himself in that day. Why? Why? he asked himself again in this night of his memory and his martyrdom. Why had he been forced and driven into hardness and into hate? He had not, like the holier of his brethren, withdrawn himself from the world. He knew the histories of that Nazarite prophet in whose name his sacred na-

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tion was, like that prophet, crucified, but crucified not once, rather year after year, century after century. A good and a pure man, the Nazarite. Aye. But the Haggadic and Midrashic books which he had seen burned on that dreadful day swarmed with stories of men as holy, as pure, and wiser, far wiser. He had gone to his death with patience and forgiveness. Aye, so had crowds of sages and confessors in the days of the Roman persecutions of old; so had Israelites of all ages even to that Rabbi Solomon Molcho, whom he had seen with his own eyes, even to those holy martyrs of Ancona, peace be upon them, who had sanctified the Name of the Eternal by their death—those four and twenty martyrs dying a death as bitter as the death upon the cross, as bitter and how much braver. For the Nazarite had had, if the Christian tales were true, but little chance of escape in the end, whereas those four and twenty martyrs had seen their more numerous brethren save their lives by recantation of their Judaism.

Lying still on his divan Shylock slowly put his hands over his heart. Was not a faint grey shimmer spreading over the world? Were not the dark edges of things beginning to define themselves? Were not these signs of the rising of the dawn? How soon would they come to drag him forth? Would it not be well if he defied them, if he cried out to the God

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of his fathers at their very altar and died whatever death they decreed? Nay. Weary and faint and despairing though he was, he smiled. Nay. He was not wholly powerless; he was not the stranger cur they deemed. The ship from the Bosphorus lay in the harbour. A message from that ship had reached him. Great and blessed things were afoot. If he lived, he might yet see with his own eyes not only his benefactress of old and his princely master but even the land of Israel. Also he was old. He had seen enough of things dreadful and cruel. The subtile smile faded from his features. He had seen enough of flames, of fugitives, of wounded, of beaten, of enslaved. Enough, enough! For no sooner had the great destruction of the books been at an end and the holy congregations in the cold peace of their desolateness than new and fierier dangers came upon them. The Neapolitan Caraffa was chosen as Pope of Rome and took the name of Paul IV, a mad fanatic who made bitter the lives of the Jews, driving them from their houses in Rome, leaving them but two places of prayer in that city and a single one in Bologna, sending spies among them to see if any copies of their books were left, issuing against them an infamous Bull in which he declared it a shame on Christendom that the Jews, condemned for their guilt to eternal slavery, should partake of Christian love and toler-

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ance. It was at that saying of the Pope—may his bones be ground in an iron mill—that Shylock and his brethren, though they were well-nigh weary of life, the very stones seeming to cry out against them, had jeered by night in the stripped house of study. Christian love and tolerance! There had been that night in the *Beth Ha'midrash* an aged man, a stranger and a wanderer, who, having been expelled from Spain many years ago, had known no rest but had travelled through Germany and France and the lands of the kings of Hungary and Poland and had made his way into farthest Muscovy and had crossed the great sea and fared through Cyprus and divers other islands and was here now to ask alms of the charitable in order that his bones might rest at last in Jerusalem. Shylock had never forgotten the face of that old man, when he heard the words of the Pope. The huge, white beard had dropped with the astonished chin and into the stern eyes under the heavy forest of white brows had come a look of horror—horror not at the deeds of the Christians, nay, but at the treacherous foxlike cunning, the stealth and blasphemy of those words upon the lips of the Pope of Rome. Long since that old man's bones had mouldered in the vale of Kidron. His face arose to Shylock's vision out of the dusk of the past.

Well did he remember the reason. It had been

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the morning of the next day that messengers, riding their beasts to death in the long night, had come to him from Ancona, the city in which, by the carelessness or greed of former Popes hundreds of Marranos had been able to settle and to practice without concealment the religion of their people. Many of these Marranos had already fled. But over a hundred had been seized and were lying in the dungeons of the Inquisition under the dread accusation of relapse. But nearly half of these prisoners were subjects of the Sultan, with whose realms the Jews of Ancona drove a great trade, and it was these that had sent swift horsemen to Shylock to beseech him to send a letter and a great cry for help to Joseph Nassi and to Donna Grazia. Even as now, thanks to the Eternal, a ship had been in the harbour of Venice and Shylock had hastened to the supercargo of that ship, a pious Jew of the city of Salonika and a faithful agent of the house of Nassi, and had dispatched through him an appeal to Donna Grazia in behalf of her brethren, the Marranos of Ancona. Weary and desperate had been the weeks of waiting, even though Shylock knew that the Pope would be wary of applying extreme measures to the subjects of Suleiman. On a certain day that same ship was to come laboring up the hoarse Hadrian sea. Storms came in its stead, casting up wreckage. Light and

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glow had gone out of the city and out of the sea and its islands and a mist hung over the horizon from which no sail or prow emerged. Shylock had stood all day and for many hours of the night on a tongue of sand near the mole of Venice. The rain had swept him and the wind tugged at his beard. He had left a command at his house that Jessica was to bring him a little food and a flask of wine. But that wayward child to whom, being motherless, too much had been forgiven had not come. She liked to slip into the crowd in the Piazza, well-dressed, holding a rosary obtained by stealth, pretending that she was not of her despised people. She would not go with a bundle of food to seek the elderly man in the yellow hat who was her father.

How that memory stung as the grey light of dawn filtered gradually in between the tall houses of the Ghetto. How grievously it stung. He had been faint and famished that day beside the iron-grey sea when at last he had espied a ship, creeping with torn sails up the flat shore. But he had cried out: Blessed art thou, Lord, our God, King of the Universe! For it had been the Turkish caravel. And he had been seen by them on board and a boat had been sent out to bring him to the ship. Bread and grapes they had given him, seeing his pallor and spoken comfortable words to him. For when she had heard the cry of

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her brethren Donna Grazia had gone at once to seek the Sultan Suleiman, who had been walking in his garden under palms and lemon trees beside the Bosphorus. She had cast herself at his feet. He had bidden her rise. Knowing only the toy-ladies of his *harim*, he had never wearied in his admiration of her and her daughter Reyna, who seemed to him to have, strangely enough, the spirits and the hearts of men. He had listened to the plea of the Lady Grazia and, wroth with the Christians on other accounts, had sworn by the holy prophet of God that he would endure no more affronts and had written in his own hand a letter to the Pope of Rome threatening dire things for the Christians dwelling in his provinces, if his subjects of Ancona, no matter of what faith, were not released from prison. This letter of the Sultan, Shylock had been told, had been dispatched to Rome by another ship. He was commanded to hasten to Ancona and to stead the released Marranos with goods and gold, so that they might take ship and reach the security of the Sultan's realm.

He had been too glad of heart to chide Jessica. He had made himself ready for his journey; he had reached the house of a kinsman of his dead wife in Ancona and had learned that the release of the subjects of the Sultan had already been decreed. Nevertheless was the community of Ancona crushed to the

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very earth. For the other imprisoned Marranos who were over fifty in number had no choice but between life on the galleys, if they would once more desecrate the Ineffable Name, or death by fire, if they refused. Forced to release half of their victims, the Pope and the inquisitors burned with a more violent rage against the others. The goods of the Turkish subjects were "alas, escaping the Apostolic treasury," as the Pope had not spared to write the Sultan. The possessions of the sixty-two others were already safe in that treasury. And these others were still lying in the foul dungeons of the Holy Office when the ship bearing the liberated ones set sail over the calm sea of May.

Shylock had had no further business in Ancona that month of *Sivan* when the peach trees were in full blossom and even in tufts of grass in the Ghetto alleys appeared here and there a vagrom violet. But he could not separate himself from the small handful of his brethren who had neither fled nor were imprisoned and who were awaiting with terror and with prayers the fate of those whom the Sultan had not been able to save. Neither Shylock nor the few faithful who were waiting ever knew what happened either in the dungeons or in the secret underground tribunal hall of the Inquisition. They knew not what agonies and tortures had been endured nor

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what great decisions had been made until one day they saw men with carts carrying boards to the place in front of the Cathedral. Next came carpenters and erected of these boards a very great platform close by the Cathedral. At either end of the platform steps were built to give access to it. Last of all came men with spades and pickaxes, and these men dug four and twenty deep and narrow holes into the earth. Then were huge stakes drawn by oxen to the Cathedral Square; young trees they were hewn to a sharp point. And these stakes were lowered into the holes and held erect with tight-packed earth and the stones of the field. And one third up each stake the carpenters made fast a little platform of wood, just big enough to support the feet of a human being and then leaned against each platform a little ladder of the boughs of trees. And now Shylock and his companions knew that four and twenty of their brethren had quenched within them the flame of the body's desire for life and for the light of the sun and preferred death to dishonour and a death by fire to a renewed apostasy. In the breast of Shylock and of the handful who were with him arose a trembling and an exaltation, a great dread and a fiery desperate courage and it had wanted little but that several of their number, among them a very young and beautiful maiden who bore the name of the mother of

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Moses, had gone to the magistrates and to the inquisitors and besought them to be permitted to share the martyrdom of the four and twenty in honour of the Ineffable Name.

The *auto-da-fé* had been set for an early hour of the morning. When dawn, rising up behind the dark hills to flush the sea, flooded the Cathedral Square, a many-coloured crowd was already gathering between the huge platform and the black stakes. Shylock and two other grave men deemed strong enough to endure the sight had come forth in such disguise as they could muster to mingle with the crowd. It smote unspeakably upon their hearts that what they were beholding was a public holiday. Here were youths and maidens in their brightest hues and peasants in clean smocks and learned men in dark robes who had left their study for the day and nobles with plumed hats, leading the ladies of their house, and soldiers in brave accoutrement. And all faces were shining morning faces and all eyes were bright and were dancing with a hard, glad quiver of anticipation. Among the crowd could be seen vendors of ribbands and baubles, humming little airs over their bright trays and two sleek jugglers in tight hose and doublet, one leaf-green, his fellow flame-red, who stopped at opposite sides of the square and tossed into the air their balls and glittering knives

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or swallowed long swords or devoured flames. But a Merry Andrew in gaudy rags with a huge false red nose drew the crowd more than these. For he had ready quips to make men laugh and sang a ballad concerning the Devil, who was brother and leader of all the Hebrews and abetted them in their foul deeds and swinish unbelief and who was even now scratching in hell his mangy hide at the thought of justice being done to a few of his minions. Richly attired nobles laughed at this song; the grave scholars in black cloaks smiled. Shylock, hearing and seeing this, knowing that these people were men and women, children of Adam, as the Talmud teaches, like himself and his brethren, of the same flesh, affected by joy and pain in the same manner, born of a mother's womb, faring through life to an equal end—Shylock had a moment in which hate left his heart. It was their foul and arrogant superstition that made beasts and murderers of these fair men and women and Shylock thanked the Eternal for having made him a Jew and not a heathen, a sufferer and not an inflictor of suffering. He had never forgotten that moment through all the long and bitter years. But it was not often that he dwelt upon it, guarding it rather like a jewel too precious for the daily sunlight of the sinful earth.

And now the hour of the *auto-da-fé* was approach-

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ing and there seemed to come over the crowd in the square a moment of joy that was wild and high and yet hid a tremor of dread and even of horror. It died down with an unexpected suddenness of hush as from between dark houses at the square's end emerged a rusty monk, raising high a great black crucifix. Fiercely his huge sandalled feet strode forward. Shylock watched those determined, relentless, busy and self-righteous feet. Later in dreams of the night he was to see those feet, the giant feet of Christendom, treading upon the tender parts of human bodies, smeared with the blood of the trodden, not to be held or stopped or guided on a kinder path. Behind the monk came the great procession of the day: the bishop in gold and white and imperial purple under the canopy upheld by beautiful boys in white and scarlet; the deacons in their brilliant vestments, and after them in robes of office with heavy golden chains and medallions the magistrates of the city. Upon these followed in sober robes of black but surrounded by youths bearing richly embroidered banners, the three inquisitors sent forth from Rome—two tall, thin men and one short, fat one, three men with coarse, sly faces, face of fox, face of wolf, face of weazel, faces with powerful cheek-bones and iron jaws. The blood shot suddenly into Shylock's head and the tears streamed from

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under his lids. For behind the three inquisitors, with thin white feet tottering over the sharp stones appeared the four and twenty impenitents, the Marranos who were going to their death, their hunger-ravaged bodies scarce covered with death-black rags, their trembling hands holding the tall, lit tapers that had been thrust into them. Shylock and his two brethren raised their scalded eyes slowly to the faces of the doomed. Aye, there trod the saintly Moses de Leon who had issued a secret writing years ago, bidding all Marranos in the same hour to reassume their Judaism, defying the Christians to burn a whole nation. And beside him—Shylock tore at his beard—his aged wife. Rabbi Moses sought to walk as close to her as he could, so that she might lean a little against him. Aye, and there walked the Rabbi's four sons; aye, and behind these erect, white of beard, burning of eye, the princely Rabbi Eleazar Hacohen ben Kalonymos, whose family was reputed to be of Davidian lineage, who had been baptized by force in his childhood in Portugal, after having seen his parents and kinsmen expire at the stake, and who had registered a vow in heaven that his death, too, some day, would be the death of a martyr, sanctifying the name of the Eternal. The tears had blinded the eyes of Shylock. Nor did he know by name and history all who trod in that procession on that day.

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But he had wiped his eyes; he had beheld the faces —faces of the wise, the kind of heart, the consecrated of soul, the high of honour who preferred an ignominious death to lies and apostasy and held this muddy vesture of decay not worth the saving. Close they passed to him, close. And he could hear the strong voice of the Rabbi Eleazar Hacohen speaking comfortable words to his companions: “*V'ahabtha eth Adonai Elohecha bekol-lebabecha v'bekol-nafshecha v'bekol meodecha.*—And thou shalt love the Eternal, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might.” With *all!* The aged Rabbi’s voice rose like a trumpet peal on that word: *beKOL!*

Now the procession had reached the great platform by the Cathedral and the bishop and the deacons and the magistrates and the inquisitors mounted upon it and sat in state upon the seats prepared for them. Below the platform stood the acolytes, swinging censers and the youths with banners and the fierce monk with the black crucifix. About these the crowd, now hushed and tense, pressed close. Then arose the tall inquisitor with the face of a wolf and declared that these four and twenty impenitents, convicted of the dreadful crime of relapse into Judaism had been sorrowfully turned over to the secular arm by the afflicted and merciful Church with the prayer

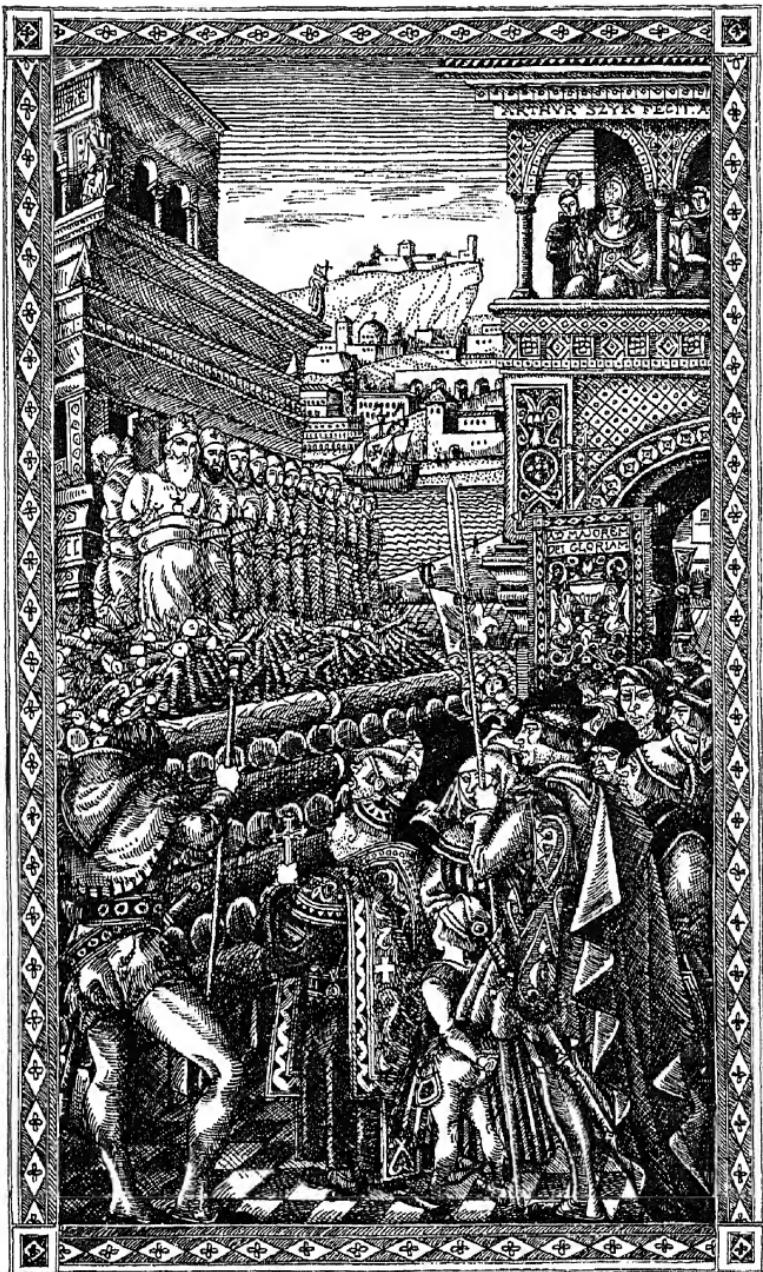
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that, whatever the punishment decreed, their blood be not spilt. These words the monk uttered in a loud voice and in the vulgar tongue. Dim hubbub of other speech arose from time to time from both magistrates and priests yonder on that platform. This Shylock had neither marked nor understood. With eyes torn wide open, with his heart beating in his very throat, with hands trembling so that he had to hold each with the other, he had pressed nearer to the four and twenty dreadful stakes. For now hangmen had come forward, lewd, red-faced, blear-eyed fellows with huge bare arms protruding from their leathern jerkins. They tore the black rags from the bodies of the doomed, leaving only a ceinture about the middle; they leered at each other; they spat upon their hands as they proceeded to hoist each pallid victim upon the little platform attached to his stake of doom; they sware great oaths because some of the martyrs were too enfeebled of body to stand and tumbled forward before the ropes could be gotten that were to tie them to their roods. At last they were all secured by many windings of rope about their pale bodies, and Shylock blessed the Eternal for that many of them seemed, with heads fallen forward, to be in a deep swoon and no more accessible to the outrages of the world. But others, among them the Rabbi Moses de Leon and his four

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sons and the tall Rabbi Eleazar Hacohen, held their heads erect and surveyed the scene with stern eyes or else, casting their glance upward, intoned from time to time verses of some eternal psalm.

Masses of dry wood and the stripped branches of trees for kindling lay ready at the foot of each stake. A word of command from the magistrates brought forth once more the hangmen, each with a flaring pine-torch swung in air. Eagerly they ran, like hounds on a scent, from stake to stake and lit the sere branches and the wood with their torches. The faggots and the fuel had been well-prepared. For at once crackle of fire was heard and curling smoke seen and in but another minute flames leaped and rose straight in the still air of that May morning. A trembling, like that of a fierce chill had come over Shylock's body. He had no more seen clear. Was it true that a youth at a stake not far from him had sought to swallow the first flames that reached his face to cut short his agony? Was it mercifully true that the wife of Rabbi Moses had never awakened from her swoon? Was it true that a single one, a young lad of sixteen, had uttered one last cry for mercy? Was it true that the Rabbi Eleazar, about whom the flames rose but slowly, had thrust his arm into the fire for all men to see and had blessed the Eternal for his martyrdom? He had not truly



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known. Tears and smoke had blinded him; the terrible trembling had not left his body. One thing he knew: from smoke and flame came voices, voices ever more faint and weak, but voices declaring even unto the ultimate silence of death the Unity of the Eternal, the triumph of the tormented over their tormentors: *Shma Yisra'el!* With covered eyes he had crept away as the flames had died and the last voice long fallen silent; he had not wanted to behold the grisly, black charred masses that still stuck to those rods, nor the fragments that had tumbled to earth. Their sufferings were over; their souls were even now in *Gan Eden*; it was he and his living brethren whose martyrdom was not yet at an end.

Slowly Shylock rose from his couch. His old limbs ached. The dawn had fully come. Others, even like those fell hounds who had burned the martyrs at Ancona, were now upon his track. Was not the great wide ever-laughing mouth of Gratiano like the mouth of one of the hangmen who had run with flaring torch to light the fire under the saints of God? Was it not like the huge red round open mouth of that butcher's boy of his childhood? *Chaserim*, swine, he muttered. He would yet find guile to oppose to their brutishness. Let them drag him to baptism. He would repeat the words after them and praise the Eternal, blessed be He, in his

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heart. There would be rest for his weary soul and his weary feet in the house of his master, Prince Joseph Nassi, beside the Bosphorus. They asked for guile; they should have it. Well he remembered the tale of how the Roman populace, upon the death of that monster Pope Paul IV, had stormed the dungeons of the Inquisition and had set free the prisoners, both Jew and Christian, and had gone forth and overthrown the statue raised to that foul oppressor and, in a moment of human fellowship, had urged on a Jew to set his yellow hat in jeering and contempt upon the head of the broken graven image. Well he remembered! The Christians had had their holiday. The Jew had been hanged. They were not to be trusted, not to be trusted!

How bitter was his tongue after the long, sleepless night and how dry and fevered were his hands. He would lave his hands and his mouth; he would eat a little of the fruit that remained in yonder cupboard. He groaned. There was no servant in the house. Once more his lids grew wet. There was no child, no daughter in the house. He must go into the next chamber where was the ewer for the washing of hands. "Blessed art Thou, O Eternal, our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments and hast bidden us to wash our hands. Blessed art Thou ——" He stopped; he lis-

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tened. He heard loud voices in the street; he heard a knocking at the door. They had come. He must hasten to wash his hands and swallow a few mouthfuls of food before they came up. He would not be too faint and ill and feeble. He would not be too faint and ill but that he might strongly in his heart curse them and bless the Eternal whatever foul and foolish words they might force his old lips and tongue to utter.



T H E S I X T H C H A P T E R

OF AN HOUR IN THE CHURCH OF SAN MARCO

“I will not eat with you, drink with you nor pray with you.”

SOME one had opened the door of the house. They who had come appeared to confer with each other there below. Shylock's quick ear distinguished the loud gay insolent voice of Gratiano. He clasped his hands. Beyond all others he loathed that fellow to whom the world was a place for hard laughter and blithe cruelty. Better the hypocritic lips that paid their worthless tribute to mercy than Gratiano's inveterate gaiety. Had it been anyone but he! Suddenly the voices below fell silent. They would be coming up. With trembling swiftness Shylock exchanged the coat he had donned the night before for a heavy black cloak with a collar of fur and slipped into his bosom, next to his skin, a precious amulet inscribed by holy men in the city of Safed, bearing in great fair letters the Name, *Shaddai*, God who is strong to protect. He crossed his hands over his bosom; he felt the cool parchment

Of an Hour in the Church of San Marco

upon his flesh; his lips moved fervently: "*Selach lanu Avim*—Forgive us, O our Father, for we have sinned; absolve us, O our King, for we have disobeyed; for compassionate and forgiving art Thou." He opened the door; let them come; he was prepared.

The heavy thumping of a wooden staff beside the footsteps clambering up the wooden stairs showed that a halberdier of the Republic had been sent by the Duke. Better such a one, thought Shylock, than a constable of the Holy Office. He turned toward the door and was already face to face with Gratiano's laughing mouth and hard eyes:

"Art prepared, old owl? Ere noon comes thou'l be a Christian, as thy daughter, well baptized and well bedded with Lorenzo and so well sprinkled o' both ends, is even now!"

Shylock knew not what it was in his own eyes turned upon Gratiano that caused the ribald guffaw in that hollow throat to end but feebly. He bowed, as he had been wont to do, when feigning humility toward a Christian for gain or for revenge, and said: "I am prepared, fair sir." Gratiano looked sullen. He turned his back. The halberdier took Shylock's arm not over-roughly and the three went down the stairs and crossed in front of Shylock's house down to the lagoon where a gondola was waiting. They

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entered it and the gondolier pushed off and Gratiano, taking off his plumed hat, hummed a ditty in which young maidens were warned against the passions that might betray them. He looked out upon the sea and hummed the delicate air: "Donzelle, fugite lasciva belta! Fugite, fugite, fugite!" Shylock watched him from under lowered lids. "I marvel much, Signior Gratiano," he said, "that of the many lovers and fair friends of Signior Antonio that be in Venice, none came forth, his own ventures meeting with ill chance, to void for the love they bore him the wicked bond I had persuaded him to sign. Is love not worth three thousand ducats among Christians here in Venice?" Gratiano went on humming his tune. "You do not well teach us Christian love by example —" The face of Gratiano suddenly turned upon him was no more the gay, insolent, debonair face. A scarlet, hate-distorted mask was beside him there in the gondola. "Hold thy tongue, dog of a Jew!" Shylock waited. "Aye, I am still a dog Jew. But soon, being baptized, I shall be a Christian. Then I shall doff my saffron hat and wear a cross on my bosom and go about Venice thus and stand on the Rialto asking whether through my baptism the price of Christian love has risen or fallen. Will't be worth more or less than three thousand ducats then?" Gratiano's teeth were clenched. "Baptized or not,

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thou'l be damned, for thou hast the soul of a caitiff!" "Then surely Christian charity will bid thee pray for me, Signior Gratiano, and I shall have the prayers of at least one good Christian." Gratiano turned his back. He hummed no more. "Seeing that thou art to be my godfather," said Shylock, "my poor soul will be thy particular care, will it not?" Gratiano made no reply. The wine of his jest had been turned into vinegar. Shylock's eyes were stern; they were the eyes of a judge in some court of eternity. The holy martyrs of Ancona had wronged themselves and all Israel by giving their bodies to the fire rather than mouth a few empty words at the command of these brutes who held the sword of the world in their hands. What did the Christian want? He wanted the Jew's gold; he wanted to glut his cruelty with the sight of the Jew's suffering. The demand that the Jew turn Christian was a springe and a snare. Were the Duke as devout of heart as the meanest in Israel, he would not have permitted him to be godfathered by this loud and irreligious knave. Shylock inhaled the morning air. He would do calmly as he was bidden. There was none who had power over his soul.

They reached the Piazza; they stepped upon the shore beside the column of the winged lion. And now, despite the thoughts wherewith he had forti-

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fied himself, Shylock's legs trembled and dragged a little. Never before had he passed the Basilica but with lowered eyes; never had he dreamed that a day would come on which he would enter the impious temple of the Nazarite. Now to the left and nearer and ever nearer it arose before him against the blue vault of the morning sky and he beheld it as for the first time and he saw that it was beautiful, beautiful as the Temple of Solomon could have been or any dream thereof dreamed through the ages of exile. He beheld the five great arches of the door supported by their double rows of columns, whereof the precious porphyry and marble glinted in the abundant light, and over the central arch that other whereon the lion of Venice stands against a deep blue sky of stars and above the two tiers of arches the three great cupolas rising into the sky from among the airy turrets at their base. And he beheld within the hollow curvature of each arch the painted scenes from the fabled life of the Nazarite: men and women in flowing garments of sky-blue and flame-scarlet against a background of gold so golden as though there had been molten into it the gold of the sun and the gold hidden in the hills. His soul grew dark within him even as he gazed upon this splendour. He felt the rough hand of the halberdier grasping his arm and urging him on. Suddenly he

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marked Gratiano running forward and joining a small, gaily attired company that was waiting at the middle door of the Basilica. Antonio was there in a rich blue, fur-trimmed coat and a blue plumed hat, stroking his pointed grey beard with unctuous satisfaction; the plump Bassanio was there, attired in rich golden brown, careful to show the whole length of his shapely legs and thighs in over-tight hose; Salanio and Salarino were there, debonair and gay, with their merry, unclouded blue eyes and innocent air as of those who loved the world and all therein and could never become acquainted with sickness or sorrow or want or grief. Aye, they were come to triumph over him and to make a show of him. Why not? Had not the mob of Ancona, gentle and simple, made a holiday of the burning of the holy martyrs? He pressed his lips sternly together. He would not resist nor cry out nor let them know that there was any perilous stuff in his bosom. He would turn their masque and cruel mummery into a ceremony cold and profitless.

Now he was beside them and he saw a glance of Antonio quell the gibes and quips of Gratiano and of Salarino. "I will be your second godfather, good Shylock," said Antonio. "Now that you are to be a Christian we must leave off our ancient enmity." Shylock closed his eyes for a desperate moment.

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Thus, he thought to himself, the jackal, having devoured the wether of the herd, might say: we are cousins-germane and have nothing left wherewith to feed our grudge. But his lips scarce open said: "I am beholden to you." With a quick movement Bassanio turned to Antonio: "Sweet friend, let us in! Ere the hour be over we must speed hence to Belmont and to my gentle lady." Shylock's heart was bitter. They were in haste; they cared not a jot for his baptism; they were carefree and richer by three thousand ducats and according to their fond conceit by many thousand more. Should he plead with them to let him go? Alack, they could not. The Duke's halberdier was at his side; the priest commanded by the Duke was in the church. The Duke would not suffer himself to be disobeyed. Already they passed under the shadow of the portal; already Shylock's eyes beheld that atrium, like the fore-court of a heathen heaven, with its columns of a glow that rivalled chrysoprase and nephrite and moonstone, with its deep-curving golden vault bearing in blue and crimson and foam-white the delineation of legendary forms. They mounted the five steps of the atrium and were met by a priest in rich vestments, an old man with a long, white hieratical face. On either side of the priest were acolytes swinging censers and Shylock heard the metal tinkle of the

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vessels and felt the sting of the sharp, sweetish fumes. The muttering priest turned and Shylock was thrust forward to follow the priest and thus passed into the huge glow and unimaginable splendour of the Basilica. Had the gorgeous East emptied all her treasures here? And how many gods did the Christians, more heathen than he had dreamed, adore? Golden were the statues, glittering with a thousand lights were the many altars; saints and confessors, angels and apostles, kings and wise men of old streamed over the gold of the walls and the ceiling.

He followed the priest to a great altar. The Venetians were behind him. The procession stopped. The priest mounted the stairs of the altar and turned and spread out his arms. He chanted in a high nasal voice. *Oremus. Flectamus genua.* Shylock felt the large uncut nails of the halberdier in the skin of his arm. He understood and kneeled, kneeled—not of any other in all Israel be it said!—at this heathen altar. He heard but dimly the priest's voice. *Levate.* The others rose. He found it hard to unbend his old knees. They let him be. Perhaps they desired him to kneel. A weakness came upon him. The fume of the incense stupefied him. He tried to pray in his heart, to call upon the Eternal: *Melech oser umoshi'a umagen,* King that art our help and saviour and shield! The voice in his heart died under the

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clamour of that other cold, nasal, chanting voice: *Oremus et pro perfidis Iudeis, ut Deus et Dominus noster auferat velamen de cordibus eorum, ut et ipsi cognoscant Christum Jesum Dominum nostrum. Oremus.* He knew not what the words meant that the voice was chanting. He felt weak and shamed and exposed in that great hollow, alien vault. He lifted his eyes and saw, half-unseeing, the glory of the mosaics. Christ was throned above between two saints. But below, between another image of the Nazarite and of his mother, were two fair pictures of David and of Solomon, Kings of Israel. Quick, hot tears came into Shylock's eyes. Had the Eternal, 'blessed be He, suffered these pictures to be here for the comfort of himself, a poor, shamed, wronged old man? Dark green and gold was the robe of David the King, crimson and dark green was that of Solomon; both robes were sown with strange small golden stars; both kings were crowned and haloed; the feet of both stood among the flowers of some meadow of Eden; behind them both was pure gold and about each a framing of crimson sown by the subtile artificer with a pattern of gold and blue. The God of Israel must have guided the heathen's hand. Upon these two images would he fix the eyes and his soul.

Suddenly he was pulled up. He stood, trembling

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a little. The execrable moment had come. Would he ever be forgiven? The great Maimon, the son of Moses, had asked mercy for those apostatizing under the threat of immediate death. Stood he in such imminent danger? Could he not have compounded for moneys? It was too late. The hard eye of the pale priest was upon him. The straight lips above him were bidding him repeat in the vulgar tongue for all to hear his repudiation of his people and his God. The Duke's armed officer was at his side. He heard the first of those dreadful words. He repeated them. "I, Shylock, an Hebrew of Venice, who pass today over into the Christian faith"—would his lips not wither and the Eternal send lightning into his blasphemous throat?—"I do so not constrained by any force"—O black lies of the impenetrable hearts of the *Goyim*!—"nor by need, nor by fear nor menaces"—by what then, King of the Universe, by what then?—"nor by poverty nor by debts nor by a penal accusation lodged against me"—He was wrought to bitter laughter. He was weak. The swine mistook the sound for a sob—"nor in view of earthly honours or assured benefactions or promises made to me by any, be he who he may, of advantage or of office, nor because of disputes or contests with my coreligionists, nor in order to gain power or to avenge myself against the Christians."

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The priest ceased for a moment. Shylock bowed his head. He struck his breast. A single word came blessedly into his mind: *Chatanu*, we have sinned! Perhaps the blessed penitential word uttered even now would mitigate his sin. His hand felt the amulet that was next his skin. He closed his eyes. He repeated the words after the priest as swiftly as he might, trying not to grasp their meaning, striving to cling to the sound and the meaning of that other word, *chatanu*, under the hubbub that was wrung from him. "Nay, it is sincerely with all my soul and with all my heart that I embrace the Christ and his faith and that I renounce the entire cult of the Hebrews"—His tongue seemed swollen, seemed to fill his gullet and his mouth. Or was he chewing hot sand? He had to tear the sputtering words from the aching depth of him one by one, the words in which he denounced and repudiated the practice of circumcision, and of the great periodic prayers and of the laws and ordinances by which he and his had lived and had died all these many centuries. He gasped for breath; he plucked at his garment as though in the hope of tearing it as men do in sign of grief over a kinsman's death. Would it never end? Had he not been standing here and blaspheming for years?—"and I anathemize all Jewish heresies and heretics, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, the Essenes and

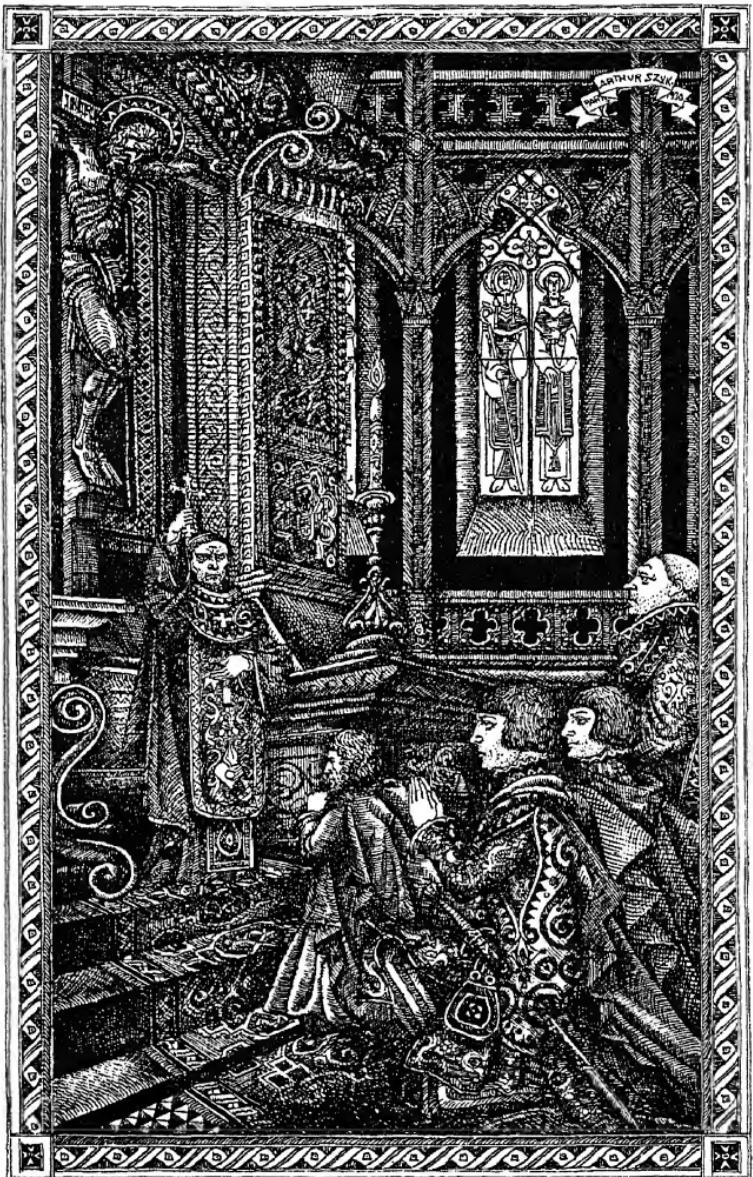
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Herodians; I anathemize the second givers of the law of the Talmud and all their works and together with them those who celebrate the feast of Mordecai and nail Haman to a piece of wood and adding a cross thereto burn him the while pronouncing imprecations and anathema against the Christians.” He felt a hot choler rise within him. Fools and swine. Never had such a practice been known in Israel. Here was the very wantonness of cruelty and folly. On and on droned the nasal voice of the priest. There came new anthemas against all Jewish customs and beliefs, against the teachers of old and the teachers of recent centuries and at last against the Messiah expected by the Jews. The droning stopped. The halberdier at his elbow signified to him that he was to kneel. He dropped, hurting his old knees against the hard marble. His eyes sought once more the image of David, the king, his king. The image was blurred. His flesh shrank. The priest was coming down the altar steps toward him. The priest held a cross over Shylock’s head. With both hands the old Jew beat his breast. *Chatanu*, his soul whispered, *chatanu*—we have sinned. The implacable priest began the profession of the orthodox faith and the death-pale lips repeated the words. Shylock wept. His tears of grief and shame and loathing fell upon the cross which the priest laid firmly across his

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mouth to kiss. It burned his mouth, that cold bronze cross, burned and seared it as the flames must have seared the mouths of the martyrs of Ancona. But they at least had been able to cry out: *Shma Yisra'el!* The priest turned and genuflected and retreated. The forehead of Shylock sank until it touched the unpitying stones of the heathen temple. Would they let him creep forth into the sunlight now? Nay, there were still imprecations to be pronounced against himself in case he had not been wholly sincere or had the intention of returning to Judaism or ever, though without a present intention, returned thereto. Then might there befall him the leprosy wherewith Gehazi was stricken; then might he expect the just punishments decreed by the secular law.

There was a moment's silence. Then, at a sign from the priest, the halberdier helped lift Shylock to his knees. They hurried him over to the magnificent baptismal font of porphyry. Now the priest gabbled his Latin in all haste and Gratiano and Antonio, visibly weary and eager to escape, gabbled certain responses and a few drops of water fell on Shylock's head and suddenly he saw the Venetians crossing a shaft of sunlight that fell on the mosaic of the floor and the halberdier was gone and he was left alone with the priest. He did not stir. All



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strength was gone from him. He had but one desire and that was to lift up his voice in weeping. The priest, now surly and dark of countenance, turned to him. "I have seen thy like ere now. Thy tears are but water, such as the crocodile exudes. Thou wilt confess to me every seventh day. Ask for Father Tincenzio. If thou are not seen at daily mass and both at high mass and vespers of Sundays, thou wilt have dealings with the Duke's men. Thou wilt give offerings for the poor and for the catechumen's house wherein young Hebrews are inducted into the Christian faith and doff thy Jew's hat and leave off the practice of usance and of taking interest; thou wilt consort not with Hebrews nor Moslems. It were best thou gavest all that is left thee to the Church and enteredst a monastery. I will take counsel with the Signoria concerning that." Shylock looked up and saw the back of nobly swaying vestments leaving him and above the vestments the grey hair of the pale priest.

He looked about him. He was alone in the vast church save for a few old women far on the other side. He raised his head fully. He was free for the hour and perchance for another hour and yet another; perchance they would leave him to himself until the hour of the early mass tomorrow. Perchance they would not spy upon him until then. He

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was trembling with weakness. But it might be that, with the help of the Eternal, blessed be He, aye, aye, blessed be He, he might gain the Ghetto and the synagogue and his house and thereafter the harbour and the Turkish caravel that lay at anchor there. Strength came to him at that thought and he moved and the floor did not burn him but bore his feet and he was out in the sunlight. Nay, there was no spy on the broad Piazza, and he ran and wondered at himself that he could still run at his age, but it was possible, nay, it must be, that the Eternal of Israel was sustaining him, despite his unspeakable sin. He gained the lagoon and, lacking his Jew's hat, hired a gondola and soon thereafter landed within very sight of his house and of the synagogue. With eyes estranged he looked upon his dwelling-place; it was no more his. Was he in truth still himself? Or had he been wrought from himself by the things that had happened on this day? He hastened to the synagogue and spreading his kerchief over his head entered it and walked forward until he had reached the *Al-memor* and there prostrated himself upon his face, prostrated himself in the dust and moistened the brown boards with his tears and prayed: "*Adonoai*, my lips open and my mouth shall proclaim thy praise. Blessed art Thou, O Eternal, our God and God of our fathers, God of Abraham, God

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of Isaac, and God of Jacob, God who art great and strong and holy, Highest God, granter of tender mercies." He beat his forehead on the floor and repeated again and again the last words: "*Gomel chasadim tovim*—granter of tender mercies." He forgot for a space both man and his deeds and the ancient earth and her troubles and let his sore heart take refuge with its God.

Thus prostrated beside the *Al-memor* they found him, the two other old men, the friends of his youth, Tubal and Chus, and laid hands upon his shoulders and upon his head, and whispered to him and warned him to flee not only from the Venetians but also from his own brethren. For even now the Rabbi was in conclave with the assessors of the synagogal court, deep in sere folios, gravely doubting whether a public recantation in face of the congregation and public acts of penitence for his baptism could be spared him. But if he performed these, he was guilty of relapse from Christianity and but food for the fires of the Inquisition; if he performed them not, he would be an outcast from his own people and driven to herd with the *Goyim* who, despite his baptism, hated and despised him still. There was no tarrying for him in Venice. But he had known that even from the beginning. It was therefore that gold and jewels and bonds had been given into their keeping. Why then

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was he not upon his way? He could spend the remnant of his days in penitential prayers; he could even fare forth to Jerusalem and lay his forehead against the ruined wall of the Temple. Only now he must haste and be gone! He arose and looked upon his friends. They appeared to be very far away from him. His outraged soul could not at once hold converse with them freely as of old. But he permitted them to guide him and support him first to his own house where he changed his garments and took naught of what was left there save the *Ketubba*, the marriage contract that had once made one of Leah and himself; next he let them lead him to the house of Tubal deep hidden in the corner of a blind alley. Here, as in a dream, he partook of food and drink; here he reposed him for an hour upon a soft couch; here were bestowed upon his person, in the deep pockets sewn into the lining of his long cloak, bags of ducats and leather bags holding precious stones and a huge wallet containing the bonds to which were attached the signatures of magnificoes and princes of the Church both in Venice and in other Italian cities. Here Chus, being older than himself and but feeble, took leave of him, giving him as a parting gift a bag of crimson velvet with the word *tfilin*, phylacteries, well embroidered upon it in heavy golden thread and another bag of strong African silk

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with the word *talith*, prayer shawl, wrought in purple and silver upon a ground of blue. And he and Chus embraced each other and spake the words of immemorial hope and farewell: "*L'shanah haba'a b'Yerushalaim!* Next year in Jerusalem!"

Tubal, however, who was very strong despite his years, accompanied Shylock to the lagoon on the side where the Ghetto faces the open. Here Daniel, the son of Chus, was once more waiting, not in a gondola now but in a strong-ribbed boat. He smiled vaguely and pointed his arm and hand across the blue water that was champing in the sunlight like a steed with foam at its mouth. Tubal nodded and smiled at the lad, whose sinewy arms, guiding the swift oars, soon brought the two old men far out upon the bay and within sight of a tall, dark caravel, strangely wimpled and with a golden crescent at its prow. The boat drew up alongside and Tubal arose and cried out to the people on the deck. Dark, turbaned sailors, naked but for a ceinture and the covering of their heads, with brown breasts tattooed in blue and ochre and silver rings in their ears, ran softly on bare feet about the deck, summoning to the caravel's side a brown-bearded man, turbaned also, but robed in white who, peering down and seeing Shylock, the servant of his master Joseph Nassi, there in the boat, bowed him down and bade the sailors let down a

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ladder of rope and descend and hold it firm for the feeble feet of the old men. Shylock and Tubal ascended and the man with the brown beard bowed him again before Shylock. And Tubal spake to Shylock: "Thou art safe. The Signoria itself dare not search a ship flying the flag of the great Sultan Suleiman." Shylock nodded. Yet his heart was heavy. The graves of his fathers were in Venice and the grave of his wife and he had not had time or strength to go and bid these graves farewell. But now the master of the ship, a tall, pockmarked Turk with a small golden crescent on his turban and a curved scimitar at his side, came forward and besought the brown-bearded supercargo to bid the servant of their master say farewell to his friend. For a fair wind was arising and the vessel had lain in the harbour of Venice until her bottom was like to be fouled and the sailors were even now clambering up the masts to spread all sail for a swift passage down the Hadrian sea. Thus Tubal and Shylock, friends for more than fifty years, united from their youth by offices of kindness and good will and common labour for the oppressed and exiled of their people, embraced each other, not without tears, and spake once more those words of unconquerable hope and quenchless aspiration: "*L'shanah haba'a b'Yerushalaim!* Next year in Jerusalem!"



T H E S E V E N T H C H A P T E R

OF HIS FLIGHT TO HIS MASTER

*“Cooled my friends, heated mine enemies. What’s his reason?
I am a Jew.”*

THE supercargo, the man with the tightly curled brown beard, belied his name, which was Shelomo, or Solomon. He was not learned, being scarce able to read the Hebrew of the sacred books, though somewhat more instructed in the Arabic letters and methods of reckoning. He had, however, a mind naturally quick and open and an unbounded love and admiration for his master, the Sultan’s treasurer, Joseph Nassi. For faring in earliest childhood with his parents across the great sea, the vessel had been captured by Portuguese pirates, who had dragged the Jews into slavery to the isle of Malta, in order to have them redeemed at a heavy ransom by the communities of Italy and the Levant. But the parents of Shelomo had both died in the earliest days of their captivity of a malignant fever of the East and the nameless babe had been left to grow up half a savage and forgotten amid the slaves

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of Malta, with none to plead for him or redeem him. But being circumcised he had been discovered by an emissary of the Lady Grazia Nassi. The Portuguese pirates and slavers, knowing the lady's great wealth, had suddenly feigned to set great store by the forgotten child and had asked an insolent ransom for his liberation. The house of Nassi had paid the ransom without haggling and the half-wild and naked boy had been brought to Constantinople and lodged with kind people, and had been brought into the presence of the Lady Grazia, who had pityingly and tenderly passed her hands through the child's hair and had kissed him on the cheek and had bidden his foster-parents send him to the school that she had established in the hope that he might become a learned man and a light in Israel. But Shelomo, as he himself confessed to Shylock, had always had a hard head into which learning would not enter. Nevertheless, the house of Nassi had not withdrawn its kindness from him. And from a bearer of burdens in one of the counting houses of Salonika he had risen during the years to being master of cargoes carried in the bottoms that belonged to his master. He had brought westward ivory for the carvers of Florence and spices and mother-of-pearl and carpets woven in Smyrna and Ispahan and Samarcand; eastward he had carried the silks of Lyons and gold

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brought from the new Indies and cloth of wool and wheat. He sat upon the deck, discoursing of these matters and boasting, after the manner of simple men, of the power and wealth and splendour of his master. The palace of Belvedere on the shores of the Bosphorus was more like a city than a palace; from afar in the light of morning could one espy its gleaming cupolas of white. Within were great halls and fair chambers in long flights, upborne by columns carven of the white marble of Carrara and the alabaster of Mizrayim. There was the wing of the palace in which dwelt the Lady Grazia and that in which the princely Joseph and his wife Reyna held their court. The aged Sultan would often come to banquet with them in their halls and walk with them in their gardens, and still oftener Selim, the Sultan's son, whom Joseph Nassi had befriended when he was in dark disgrace and almost an outcast from his father's house. These banquets and garden feasts Shelomo had never seen; the garden of roses, the special care of the Lady Reyna, he knew only from the blossom-laden boughs that overtopped its walls and from the fragrance that the freighted winds brought from it. But what he had often seen was the early morning court to which came not potentates or princes, nor viziers nor ambassadors, but Jews craving help and counsel and refuge: Marranos

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once proud and rich, now fleeing from France and Italy or from the fierce Berbers of the Afric coast with nowhere to lay their heads; tall men in fur-trimmed hats and comely women, rich in learning, though somewhat raucous of speech, who had been expelled from the cities of Germany or impoverished by the exactions of the Emperor whose serfs they were by law, or else sold by the Emperor to petty princes or profligate bishops or merely leased to these for a term of years and so crushed by burdens that they could neither live nor die. Many came who had been mutilated in the torture-chambers of the Inquisition or by the Muscovites of the frozen plains or had fled from the Barbary coast to the great desert and had been enslaved by Bedouin tribes, and all had been aided or ransomed or healed by the house of Nassi and were now given land to till or goods to trade with or houses of study in which to pray and read in Salonika or in Stamboul. "To that morning court I too shall repair," said Shylock. "For though I have rendered the House of Nassi some service in my time, I too come thither now as a fugitive and a suppliant."

The fair winds held, yet the voyage took many days. For emerging from the Hadrian sea, the caravel spoke another Turkish ship from which word came that pirates, both Frankish and Berber, were



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sweeping the seas in strong ships and well-manned. Therefore the caravel steered first south-west, away from the islands and far out into the great sea, before turning eastward again toward Stamboul and the straits. Shylock sat on the deck and saw for the first time the great, hard, turbulent radiance of the ocean and blessed the Eternal for having created so huge a marvel. The wind of spring rose higher from time to time and whistled sharply through the rigging and the vessel was tossed by the resistless waves first high atop sunny crests, then down into the green of mysterious gulfs. But Shylock clung to his place in the open, for the foul hold sickened him, and eating but a little bread and fruit from the supercargo's store, he held out bravely, despite his years, and healed his soul by reciting many a prayer and penitential psalm both under the blue heaven of the Midland sea and under the heavy stars of the night. Now and again there would surge up in him fierce rage at the wrong done himself and all his tribe and at other times a wound would seem to open in his heart, a small deep wound from which the blood oozed, drop by aching drop, and that was the wound dealt him by Jessica, his only child, and he knew that this was a wound which neither penitence nor prayer nor submission to the will of the Eternal, blessed be He, would ever heal. Meditating upon

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this he was almost persuaded that he might better have fared straight to Jerusalem to spend in quietude and prayer the few and evil days that still were left him. But although he was now in his four and sixtieth year, his active and indomitable spirit could never rest long content with the contemplation of such an ending. Rather did he desire to hasten the slow weeks of the voyage in order to meet and to embrace his master, to tell his tale and to demand whether naught could be done to humble the proud false Venetians and to bring justice and comfort to the house of Jacob.

It was on the morning of the seventeenth day of the voyage that Shelomo came to tell Shylock that the ship was within sight of the straits, and not long thereafter there came into view the white walls and slender towers and domes of the city of the Sultan dazzling the eye in the sharp sunlight of the East. Sailing through the blue strait, Shelomo stood beside Shylock and pointed, when they approached it, to the palace Belvedere of the house of Nassi, and Shylock strained his old eyes and marvelled at the cupolas and at the great balconies with their richly carven wooden columns and the wooden grille-work of their balustrades and saw dark, ancient cypresses throwing their shade athwart these and was filled with amazement and with joy. And toward sunset

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the ship cast its anchor and Shylock, guided by Shelomo, entered the city under the pointed arch of one of the great gates and found himself in the world of the Moslems and heard the sunset call of the *muezzin* from the high minarets of the mosques: *la ilâha illâ'llâh Mohammed rasul Allâh*. Aye, he nodded. There is no God but God, though surely the warlike Arab camel driver had been no messenger of the Eternal. They made their way between long white walls broken only now and then by a carven, pointed door or by the green metal work of a lattice high up and were softly jostled by men in turbans and flowing robes whose soft-slippered feet made no sound as they trod and Shylock was aware of feeling at home despite the passing strangeness of the scene. But coming out from narrow alleys into a crowded square under the arches of a mosque they met a man in a green turban who was a public crier and behind him came men with torches. And when Shelomo understood the chanted words of the crier he turned first white with fear and then ruddy with pleasure, and he caught Shylock by the wrist. "I was away with the ship for nigh two months and come back like a stranger. Our Lord, the Sultan Suleiman is dead; there has been a month's mourning, but tomorrow they are crowning his son Prince Selim, who loves our master Joseph Nassi even as brother loves

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brother. Our master will be at the crowning and at the great feasts; he will sit higher than any save princes and save the Grand Vizier Mohammed Sokolli." His face darkened. "He alone is no friend of ours." He whispered. "A Frank of Venice who accepted Islam—but still a Frank in hate and guile." A solitariness came suddenly upon Shylock. He had hoped to go straight to Don Joseph and to Donna Grazia, his friends of old. Now they seemed far away and high above him. "I am weary," he said to Shelomo. "Lead me, I pray you, to a safe inn. I have no mind for rejoicing. I shall lie at the inn for some days. Perhaps when all the feasts are over, I shall seek out our master." To this Shelomo agreed. They left the square of the mosque and of the crowd whose upturned faces were like bronze in the light of the smoky torches and came shortly to a street of bazaars. Most of the shutters of wood were closed, but a few of the vaulted bazaars were still open and from the faces of the merchants who sat behind their wares Shylock perceived that he was among Israelites.

From the street of the saddlers they turned down the street of the silversmiths and thence into an alley without bazaars in which Shelomo knocked at a dark door. It was the innkeeper himself who opened unto them, a small, swarthy, agile man. Attentive to the words of Shelomo he bade an hon-

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ourable welcome to the friend and Venetian agent of the great Joseph Nassi and Shylock, having bidden farewell to Shelomo, was soon conducted to a synagogue nearby where he refreshed his weary body in the hot ritual bath and offered thanks to the Eternal for having brought him safely out of the hands of evil men and across the dangers of the great sea. At the inn a fair repast was spread and the innkeeper himself waited upon him. With quick, busy self-important steps the small black man went to and fro. He stopped and laid a thin brown finger mysteriously against his nose. Did the high Rabbi, who was no doubt the descendant of learned teachers, know what great things were afoot? Shylock looked up with questioning sombre eyes. It was known in the Jews' quarter, averred the innkeeper, that the new Sultan Selim had in store higher honours for Joseph Nassi than any that a Jew had known in a strange country since Joseph ben Ja'akob under Pharao in the land of Mizrayim. Aye, the criers were to proclaim it tomorrow, that Joseph Nassi was from now on Duke of Naxos and of the Cycladean Isles. And on these islands—the innkeeper came close to Shylock and grimacing whispered in his ear—there were but few Moslems. Greeks dwelt there, and so it was coming to pass that a Jew would be the ruler of Christians. The

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little man drew himself back and surveyed Shylock, awaiting the marks of astonishment and joy. But the soul of Shylock had suddenly grown dark. He knew not why. But he remembered fugitives and martyrs, the old, the blind, the mutilated who had once been great lords and dwellers in palaces and king's coun-cilors in Spain before the days of the Holy Office. Therefore he answered the innkeeper but curtly and asked to be shown to his place of rest.

Pleading his years and the weariness of the voyage, he did not venture forth on that next day, but heard even from an inner chamber the din of drums and the blare of trumpets and the cries of the populace and the clattering hoofs of the Sultan's cavalry. But toward evening his heart began to burn with impatience and on the morning of the second day he bade the innkeeper hire him an ass and a guide to bring him to his master's house beside the Bosphorus. Setting forth he was amazed at both the squalor and the splendour of the Sultan's city. Lepers he had seen before and blind men and men whose limbs were swollen to huge proportions. But never had he seen them in such numbers. They clamoured after him and grew bold and came close and he flung among them a handful of small Venetian coins. He was glad to be beyond the city on a road between the sea and the olive orchards. He met a Greek shepherd

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with his flock and perceived his heart to be quieted by the mild white faces of the sheep and the soft gambols of the lambs following the ewes. Then from among the cypresses he saw the white domes of the palace of Belvedere and soon was at its door and besought the doorkeeper to tell the Princess Grazia Nassi that one Shylock of Venice craved speech with her.

Swiftly the answer came. Swiftly he was led across a noble court, marble-floored, surrounded on all sides by carven arcades, adorned with a fountain set amid rose-bushes, into a tall chamber where Donna Grazia rose and hastened, as of old, to meet him. Her hair was white now and the last bloom had faded from her skin. But the eyes glowed as in other years and the long, mobile hands had all their old imperiousness and passion. "You have come at a great time, old friend! But why had we no news of your coming?" She looked into Shylock's eyes. Her own darkened. "Did the Christians drive you forth? It was ever their way." She bade him sit. He unfolded his tale to her and lived over again the last bitter days of his life in Venice. She listened with bowed head. "And you have no news of your daughter?" "None." His throat was dry. There was no sound but the soft plashing of the fountain in the court. Donna Grazia raised her white head slowly;

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the long hands were folded in her lap. "Joseph has said to me that I am too fond and too much at peace; in jest he has said to Reyna and me that women have but short memories and are dazzled by the glitter of the moment. I do not know why your tale makes me think upon his words; I do not know!" She unclasped her hands and put one upon her brow. "You shall be our guest; our house is yours. But come! Even now, at this hour, the Duke of Naxos holds his first court. Thereafter he is free for a space."

She led him forth from her chamber through a long many-columned gallery and by a side door they slipped into the hall, black and white vaulted, softly agleam with Moorish tiles. Here upon a low dais sat Joseph Nassi, iron-grey now, with deep furrows in his face and grave, impassive eyes. Below him sat on a divan in Turkish fashion his Moslem secretaries. Against the wall at his right upon a dais as high as his own sate a tall thin man in the garb of a Moslem dignitary, but with a mobile, crafty, italiciate face. In a clear space that separated the secretaries from a multi-coloured crowd of clients and suppliants stood beside a tapestried Italian chair a short, thick, blond soldier in leathern attire, tall iron-spurred boots, and large plumed hat held in his gloved hand. His blue eyes were fixed upon the

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Duke of Naxos. He was speaking. "Your Highness and your Highness's family are not unacquainted with the uses of Spain and of her Holy Office. Black priests lead the soldiery of the Duke of Alba; Philip of Spain has given the command to wipe out the heretics of the Netherlands. Our villages burn; our people are slaughtered, as yours were often, for their faith. My master, William of Orange, is not only the defender of Protestantism but of the liberty of all men to worship God according to conscience." The speaker paused. The Duke's imperturbable eyes moved scarce perceptibly toward the tall, thin Italian-looking Moslem on the opposite dais. "The Grand Vizier Mohammed Sokolli," Donna Grazia whispered into Shylock's ear and her words were a soft hiss of hate.

The Duke spoke in a level voice. "The interests of State which I represent in the name of my exalted master cannot be determined or even touched by any memory of the sufferings of myself or those who profess my religion. I am persuaded, however, as hath long been known, that the power and overweening pride of Spain, coupled with the cruelty and ruthlessness of her present king, are a menace to the realm and to the subjects of my exalted Lord, the Sultan, and that a declaration of war against Spain would confer added power and undying glory to the

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reign which hath so auspiciously opened. But we are all only the servants of our exalted Lord." Joseph Nassi had spoken slowly with an occasional glance at the secretaries below him. He was eager to assure himself that his words were recorded even as he had spoken them. He now turned to the Grand Vizier. "We are awaiting the words of your Eminence's wisdom."

Mohammed Sokolli smiled a cold smile. "Allâh is great and the councils of our exalted Lord, the Sultan, are inscrutable. It is well known of all men that your Highness has a most warm and charitable heart, touched by all tales of war or woe and likely to gain for your Highness a warm place in that bosom of Abraham to which your faith teaches you to aspire. But whether the punishment of rebellious peasants in some obscure corner of the barbarous North will seem to our exalted Lord, the Sultan, a sufficient reason for holding the menace of Spanish power to have suddenly increased—that is a question, your Highness, which it is beyond my poor wisdom to decide." Again the Grand Vizier smiled his cold broad smile, which wreathed his face but did not reach his eyes. A deep and bitter line appeared between the brows of Joseph Nassi. He bowed lightly toward Mohammed Sokolli, without regarding him; he turned to the Dutch messenger.

Of His Flight to His Master

“You must wait. I shall strive to gain the ear of my sublime Master. But I am only a servitor.” He raised his arms slowly and laid two fingers of each hand against a temple. “Bid the suppliants return tomorrow,” he ordered his secretaries, “I am still weary from the great festivities.”

Donna Grazia plucked Shylock’s sleeve lightly. They left the hall in which suddenly the stirring of many men was heard, by the same side door. The lady led him to a far, bright chamber with doors and windows opening upon the inner court of the fountain. Here Shylock greeted the beautiful Lady Reyna, still with the bloom of youth upon lip and eye, but a little listless with the sorrow of her barrenness which no leech’s potion and no herb of Gilead had been able to cure. They waited but a moment for the swift steps of the Duke. He came in suddenly, his robes of state flowing behind him in the wind of his tread. He threw an arm about Reyna and laid the hand of the other on Shylock’s shoulder. “I saw thee with our mother, Shylock, though I feigned not to see. What brings thee from Venice? Ah, but I am glad to see an honest Jewish face amid the spies and foes and creeping things of this court, though my Lord Selim has a heart of gold and my late Lord, may he rest in peace, was my true friend. Ah, Shylock, Shylock, didst thou note? Didst thou

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hear? I am persuaded in all honesty, even as I hope to be recorded in the Book of Life, that we should declare war upon Spain and that by aiding the Dutch heretics we would help to bring the time of the Messiah a little nearer for all men—aye, for all. But if I urge war with all the power I would, Mohammed Sokolli would go to Selim—he will go even now—and say: ‘The Jew thinks only of his own; the Jew loves you and the empire but more he loves his own.’ And that small drop of poison will spread in the Sultan’s soul, for the Venetian rogue has accepted Islam and prostrates himself five times a day and feigns to fast during Ramadân! It is a matter, Shylock, as subtile as the beast that tempted our first parents. For in truth Sokolli would not see Spain and Venice humbled. How wise were our sages warning us of the proselyte. Yet this truth Selim cannot see, and because I worship God after the manner of our fathers, he deems me a little less close to him and his empire than the apostate! Yet it is Sokolli who has no scruples and it is I who ask myself each day whether the counsel I give my Lord is anyway dictated by the love I bear Israel. I am weary, good Shylock, weary.”

He dropped upon a divan and drew Reyna gently down beside him. He kissed her hair. “Look not sad, my beloved. The Eternal, blessed be He, sus-

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tains us.” He clapped his hands and servitors came in with silver ewers for the washing of the hands and others with platters of fruit and bread and meat and sweets and goblets of cool sherbet against the heat of the day. “Thou lookest sombre, Shylock,” the Duke said, when the servitors were dismissed, “tell us thy news.”

Shylock rehearsed his tale once again. He strove to make it brief. A vein swelled upon the forehead of Joseph Nassi. He laughed an angry laugh. “The Christians accuse us of tricks and dishonest dealing. Thy tale reminds me of the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire who still refuses to pay his debt to our house, feigning that the money was borrowed of Christians and must not be paid back to Jews, and of the King of France, who is still our debtor on the same plea. Aye, Christianity is a thrifty religion. When they burn us they first confiscate our goods; when they borrow of us, they are at once minded to compound with their conscience for not paying us. Thrift, thrift, good friend, guided no less your Venetians. But I am glad thou hast come. I have use for thee. Art thou still hale enough for a little labour?”

“What is it that I have left in life save to serve you?” Shylock asked. He hoped in his heart that he would be bidden to engage in some enterprise di-

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rected against the Signoria of Venice. With the swift, passionate movements of old, Donna Grazia laid a hand upon Shylock's old one.

“Tell of thy plan and thy dream, O Joseph; rightly art thou named Joseph, for like him of old thou art a dreamer.”

The Duke frowned a little. As though for support he drew Reyna's arm through his own. “Perchance I am a dreamer; perchance I am. But hear me, Shylock, hear me! My Lord, the Sultan, whom I have served well and who doth truly love me, has made me lord over Naxos and other isles and the ambassadors of the Franks—of the Kings of France and Poland—seek already to gain my favour and address me as ‘exalted Excellence’ and call me *Dux Ægei Pelagi*, Duke of the Ægean Sea. Yet am I sure that I will never visit the islands of which I am lord, for the Greek Christians who dwell there will rise against my Lord when they behold my face—the face of a Jew. And I am secretly persuaded, Shylock, that my Lord has bestowed this high honour on me not least because I am a good gatherer of taxes and subtile in devising schemes whereby to increase the wealth and therefore the tribute of the Greek islanders. Therefore I shall send to rule over those islands a young Spaniard called Coroleno, who professes to love and honour me in place of that

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father whom he lost in his childhood. And I do in truth believe that the youth loves me. Yet I tremble, I, Joseph Nassi, when I am told that Angelo Coroleno has been seen consorting with a disguised priest of the Latin Church; I tremble when in all innocence doubtless he attends the court of the Grand Vizier; I tremble when the Grand Vizier is closeted with my Lord, the Sultan; I tremble most when I behold the evil eyes of that stripling Murad, Selim's son, whose mother is at the beck and call of her first tiring-woman, a Christian of Cyprus. But I dare not speak to my Lord of aught that concerns the ladies of his *harim*. Yet my soul tells me that the days of Suleiman and the days of Selim will be followed by days that are dark for me and my house and for the house of Jacob in all the lands of the Turk, even as there were good days in Spain and evil days and good days in the lands of the Popes of Rome and evil days. We are always as the grass that springeth up and is mowed down again, or as a shadow cast by a tree which disappeareth when the sun sinks in the vault of heaven."

He fell silent for a space and his brow was lowered and none durst speak. Suddenly he raised his head. "Mistake me not, good Shylock. I say not with *Koheleth* that all is vanity; I say not that my Lord is not my loyal friend or Angelo Coroleno or others.

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But man hath no perfect empire over his soul and hours come when all men deem us strangers. And now my great name and fame bring hither the oppressed and broken fugitives of Israel and my Lord says: let them come! But there are Pashas of power whose followers murmur: the Jews will drive us out of our own land; the Jews come like locusts eating our harvests; there is an *ulema* come out of Araby to proclaim the curses wherewith Mohammed cursed us, the people of the written Word. And also there are brought to me murmurs of the Armenian and Greek merchants concerning the rivalry of Jewish houses and little will be wanting but that as in the days of Rabbi Moses Hamon, may he rest in peace, there be raised the accusation of ritual murder, such as that by which in the city of Amasia the noble Jacob abi Ajub and other of our brethren found their death. And is it not a strange thing, not to be made clear by the mere wisdom of man, that though the Moslems hate and despise the Christian, yet is the *Kadi* of no city unwilling to hear a Christian accusation against a Jew?"

Reyna laid a hand upon the forehead of her husband. "Be not so wrought upon, beloved. Tell of thy great hope."

Joseph Nassi smiled and took a purple fig from its green leaf and held it in the hollow of his hand

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as though for coolness. "It was not long before the death of my Lord Suleiman the Great that he bade me ask a favour of him. And to him I opened my heart saying: We are strangers everywhere and everywhere there is raised the cry that was raised in Mizrayim of old time that if we multiply in numbers or in wealth we are enemies and should be oppressed. And I jested and said: there may come a Sultan who knows not thy servant Joseph Nassi. And again he bade me ask and promised to refuse me naught. And I asked him for the city of Tiberias and for seven villages and for the lands round about in the land of Israel to be a country and a place of refuge and a land of their own for as many of our people as could dwell there. I dared not ask for Yerushalaim which Suleiman had caused to be surrounded with great new walls nor for Hebron nor even for the holy town of Safed. I asked for a ruined city and for villages in the sand of the hills and for forgotten lands. And my Lord granted my request and Selim hath promised to confirm this gift by a *firman* sealed with his great seal and signed with his own hand. And the Pashas of Damascus and of Safed will be bidden to obey my messengers and the people will be bidden to give aid to us in that land and I will cause to be rebuilt the walls of the city wherein, in the times of the Rabbis Ami and Assi,

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were thirteen synagogues and I will not stint of gold and of labour to bring thither the dispersed of Israel to dwell, if it please the Holy One, blessed be He, under their own vine and under their own fig tree once again.”

Shylock felt his heart tremble in his bosom. “And you have need of me in this enterprise? And shall my old eyes behold the land of Israel?”

The Duke nodded. “I am dispatching my almoner, the Rabbi Joseph ben Ardu and there will be with him eight officers of the household of my Lord, the Sultan. Now Joseph ben Ardu is well used to bestowing gifts on the hungry or building a house of study or providing a poor merchant with a bundle of wares to sell. But thou hast a mind versed in great affairs and thou hast been privy to all the projects of our house. Wilt thou go, taking with thee great treasure?”

Shylock lifted up his eyes. “Blessed beest Thou, O Lord, our God, King of the Universe, for that Thou lettest me behold this day!”

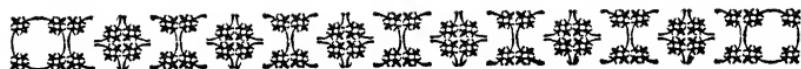
The Duke bent over toward Shylock. “It is my Lord who will help us to rebuild the walls of the city. But people cannot live on the stones of towers nor on trading with the Arabs. I have it in mind to bring to that country thousands of mulberry trees for the feeding of silkworms; we shall set up looms

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and teach the people to weave and perchance our silk will be as good as the silk of the looms of Lyons, which enrich the false King of France. Also I shall bring wool from Spain and Spanish sheep to produce the wool and it may be that we can weave woollen fabrics like the fabrics of Venice, which enrich the cruel magnificoes there. Dost thou understand, Shylock?"

Shylock kissed the hand outstretched toward him.
"When does the ship sail?"

"You are like a youth in strength and eagerness," Donna Grazia said. "Some weeks must pass until then. You must repose yourself for a space. I will bid a chamber be given you and show you our garden of roses. Also we have a house of study beside our gate and a printing press that prints our holy books. Abide here in peace."



T H E E I G H T H C H A P T E R

OF THE BUILDING OF A CITY

“Our sacred nation . . .”

THERE was a high and not always prudent impetuousness about Joseph Nassi. It was the early spring of the year and although Selim had not yet issued the *firman* under his hand and seal commanding the Arabs of Galilee to rebuild the ruined walls of Tiberias, Joseph Nassi had already issued a proclamation in the harbours of Europe that the oppressed of Israel were to arise and make themselves ready to return to the land of the fathers under his protection. The news of the proclamation travelled to remote settlements and lost villages. Men and women and children gathered their few movable goods and filtered through the long-mired dangerous roads and forded rivers and crossed mountains and had a light upon their faces and met at cross-roads in wild woods where wolves and boars were scarcely kept at bay by the feeble fires of their camps of the night and whispered to each other:

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Next year in Jerusalem; this year here, next year in Jerusalem. From Lithuanian bogs they came and from Volhynian plains, from immemorial congregations of the Rhineland cities, from the towns of the Vosges mountains and from the fair towers of France, greeting each the other in the language of their prayers, carrying their Torah scrolls and their books, leaving gear and bread upon the roads rather than these whatime the burden became too heavy, worshipping, singing, even multiplying Israel upon their long, long pilgrimage. At length many began to reach the harbour cities: Marseilles and Genoa, Venice and Naples and abode there to the great fury of the inhabitants, and even the house of Nassi had not ships enough to bear all these people, led by a faith, seeing nothing but a star, to their distant goal.

Thus it happened that Shylock's rest in the palace of Belvedere was brief. Ships great and small needed to be bought or leased and fitted out and sent forth. The Duke moreover was besieged by the ambassadors of the Franks. For the Turks had all but conquered Hungary and the Emperor Maximilian II sent his emissaries of peace with great gifts to the Duke of Naxos; the King of Poland, Sigismund August, however, sent promises instead of payment of the great sums he owed the house of Nassi and yet besought the Duke, "that exalted lord and his

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most special friend," to assure his ambassador a friendly reception at the Sultan's court. The Sultan himself urged upon his friend the instant seizure of the ships of the King of France and the Republic of Venice, who openly repudiated their debts. But Joseph Nassi was too aware of the intrigues that coiled about him to accept his sovereign's offer and his heart was with the wanderers whom his word and promise had caused to leave their poor homes and the graves of their fathers. He sent for Shylock. "I am my Lord's servant," he said, "I am the friend of kings"—he smiled bitterly, "I am Duke of the Ægean Sea. I grow dizzy, Shylock. The day may come when I have nowhere to lay my head. The Vizier has formed a mighty friendship with Grand-champ, the ambassador of France, a rogue by instinct and a murderer by trade. Get me ships for our people; get me trees of the mulberry; buy all the wool of Spain. It may be that I, too, shall one day be a grower of silk or a weaver of wool in a stone hut beside the Lake Genasereth. Haste thee!"

Shylock descended into the city to the counting houses of Grazia and Joseph Nassi. He chaffered with Greek shipwrights who were both pious and sly and eager to give unsafe bottoms that might founder under unbelieving Jews; he bargained with Spanish merchants of wool, who feigned to have no

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store of that commodity and must ask the weight in silver of what little they could come by. The word had gone forth concerning the purpose of these preparations and though all men hated and cursed and tormented the Jews and prayed to be rid of them and expelled them from cities and lands, yet no Christian seemed willing to help them to make their final exit from Christendom. Upon this Shylock meditated as upon a mystery until Armenian monks, hooded and swathed in black, broke into a shipyard one night and sought to set fire to the new-laid keels of the house of Nassi and, being caught, declared before the *Kadi* that the dispersion of the accursed Jews was a living witness of the truth of their God Christ and must nowise be brought to an end. The *Kadi* ordered the monks to be bastinadoed. But thereafter *shomrim*, or watchers, were called for from among the pilgrim Jews and left not by night or day either goods or ships, either plants or beasts. And Shylock felt neither his age nor the weakness of his body, but toiled through the hot days in the service of his master and his people. Only now and again he stopped and seemed lost in thought and saw again in vision the Venetian court of justice and the masks and the torches of that night on which his only child deserted him and the gold and blue of

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the mosaics in the Basilica di San Marco and the white impenetrable face of the accursed priest.

At last the preparations came to an end. Selim had signed the *firman* concerning Tiberias and the seven villages and Shylock and Joseph ben Ardu and the Turkish officers who were to see to it that the Jews' bidding was done, took ship for the harbour of Akko in the land of Israel. Shylock and Joseph ben Ardu were aboard and seven officers of the Sultan's household. But the chief of them came late, a tall man with golden-hued eyes and white robe and turban and jewelled scimitar. Shylock and Rabbi Joseph rose to greet the Emir Achmet ibn Abdullah. He turned upon them unseeing eyes and spat out upon the deck. Shylock with clenched fists turned to Rabbi Joseph. "Is it thus that the Sultan's commands will be carried out?" Rabbi Joseph thrust his hands into his wide sleeves. His expression had not changed. "You are but newly come among us, Rabbi. The Sultan's commands will not be disobeyed. Nay, not wholly. But they will be obeyed in a niggardly and hostile spirit. Look you, I have no belief in this enterprise. It was for that that our master Joseph Nassi was so glad of your coming and of your help. The Sultan, may he live to be an hundred years, loves our master and, through the love he bears him, is well inclined toward us. But the officers of his court

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laugh behind his back, even as they tremble, at his foolish weakness for the dog Jews. There be some who honour the Duke truly, but they do so in the belief that he is not like other Jews, knowing not of the strong tie that binds him to the humblest of us."

"And what help shall we have," asked Shylock, "from the Pashas of Damascus and Safed?"

Rabbi Joseph shrugged his shoulders. "The Sultan will be obeyed. Nor do I fear the Turks as I fear the Arabs. In Maghreb, my country, there is a saying: though an Arab has been dead for seven years, visit not his tomb without a dagger."

Shylock bowed his head. "How shall we protect our people, then?"

Rabbi Joseph drew very near and whispered. "If need be there will be signal fires burned by the holy rabbanim of Safed and these will be answered and lit from hill to hill, even to Yerushalaim where dwells the governor of the Sultan, an honourable man and one who is indebted to our master."

They spoke of these things no more during the voyage. The officers of the Sultan's household were ever about them and the cold golden eyes of the Emir Achmet ibn Abdullah were often on them. The Moslems prayed their nvefold daily prayers upon the deck of the vessel, casting contemptuous glances at Rabbi Joseph and at Shylock before pros-

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trating themselves on their carpets. Their eyes were even more contemptuous when Joseph and Shylock putting on their phylacteries and wrapping themselves in their praying-shawls, praised the Eternal. Of speech there was little or none between the Moslems and the Jews. Toward the end of the voyage Shylock thought it meet to inform the Emir that he was the paymaster of the expedition and had power to grant expenditures of gold or to refuse them. The Emir drew himself up and tugged at his short beard. "I know it, O Jew!" And the word *Ihudi* was like the crack of a camel-driver's whip.

It was on a certain noon that the ship entered the harbor of Akko and Rabbi Joseph and Shylock wept as they beheld the excellency of Mount Carmel like a mass of tarnished gold between the blue of the sea and the blue of the Palestinian sky and blessed the Eternal for that it was given them to behold the land of Israel. Turkish sailors rowed them to the shore and they took off their shoes in reverence for the land. They hired asses and rode along the wooded circle of the bay to the city of Haifa and sought out Jews there and, to their grief, found their brethren in huts of mud in the midst of the huddled, stinking Arab town, despised by the Moslems and by the Carmelite monks of the cloister who, though hating each other, made common cause.

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against them. They were poor people, these Jews; many of them gained a wretched livelihood by gathering the shells of the Tyrian snail on the banks of the brook Shichor Libnath and sending the purple dye-stuff to Venice. But they were a pious folk, as befitted men living in the land, and were full of tales of the mighty and wondrous works of the mystic sages who dwelt in Safed. What mattered, said they, hunger or thirst or the contempt of the nations? The end of exile was at hand; the days of the Messiah were near. Already had saints set out from Safed to Meron to the grave of Simon ben Jochai and thence to the shores of Lake Genasereth, who knew the secret ineffable Name of God as well as the names of the angels and who would conquer the evil spirits Samael and Lilith, his wife, who prevented the prayers of the Jews from reaching the throne of the Most High. And it being now Friday, the eve of the Sabbath, these poor people clothed themselves in white garments and, holding palm branches in their hands, took Rabbi Joseph and Shylock in their midst, and went forth from the sordid town to the groves at the foot of Mount Carmel and confessed their sins to each other and welcomed the Sabbath in that great new song written by Rabbi Salomo Alkabez in Safed: "*Lecha dodi, likeraoth kalah! P'nei shabbath nekabelah!*" Come, my friend,

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let us hasten to meet the bride, to greet worthily the face of the Sabbath!" The singing of these people was full of pride and triumph. "Zion," said they, "is the heart of the world!" And they sang: "Kingly temple, tower of might, arise, come forth from thy ruins; leave, O leave the valley of lamentations!" They returned to the city and lit Sabbath candles in their wretched huts and blessed both bread and wine and gave of their best to Rabbi Joseph and to Shylock who, in their turn, spread a goodly feast on the Sabbath day for as many as could come of the Jews of Haifa and abode among them until the first star announced the beginning of another week.

At the sunset hour they mounted their asses and rode back to Akko, whence the caravan of the Duke's people was to set out for Tiberias on Sunday morning. Early on Saturday morning Turkish horsemen had been dispatched to Safed to show the Sultan's *firman* to the Pasha, who was straightway to issue an edict to the people of Tiberias and of the seven villages of the Duke, commanding all masons and public porters of those places to aid in the rebuilding of the walls and the city, under threat of heavy punishment against whoever refused his help. The men were to gather and prepare clay and sand from the shores of the lake and hew marble and granite from the many and mighty ruins of synagogues and of Ro-

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man temples and baths of the old time that were scattered about that land. And to the Sultan's *firman* had been added a writing and a proclamation of the Duke of Naxos, that all labourers, of whatsoever kind, who obeyed the commands of their Lord, the Sultan and of his Eminence, the Pasha of Safed, were to be well paid by the Duke's treasurer, Shylock of Venice, and it was further to be made known to the people that if illness befell them or their wives or their children, they were to call for help upon the Rabbi Joseph ben Ardu^t who would send among them Jewish leeches from the many who were to be found among the wanderers and fugitives.

At dawn the caravan set out from Akko, the Emir Ahmed and the Turkish officers on Arabian horses, Rabbi Joseph and Shylock on small, sure-footed mules, the first group of the Jewish fugitives from exile on asses or even on foot. It was not many hours before they came into the hill country. Narrow mule-tracks, dotted with holes or covered by rocks, climbed the precipitous sides of barren mountains. Eagles circled over the riders and stragglers; mountain-goats with horns curved like scimitars leaped from rock to rock above them; the women of the fugitives from the city Ghettos of Europe began to wail at the horror of the scene. Their husbands and fathers, themselves aghast at the wildness of the country,

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consoled and supported them. A great fear came upon the wayfarers that night would overtake them in the mountains and even the heart of Shylock trembled less for himself than for the brethren in his care. But at dusk when the narrow path was becoming faint to the sight, the valley of Beth Netopha spread out before them and a few faint lights, as of torches, could be descried. Rabbi Joseph and Shylock gave thanks to the Holy One, blessed be He, for His wonders and His care, and the people tethered their beasts and built fires and ate of the grain and the dried dates they had brought with them and compared themselves to the Israelites of old whom Moses led out of Mizrayim into the desert and the wilderness of Mount Sinai. Having eaten and prayed they laid themselves upon the earth to sleep, trusting that the soil of their own land would give them of its virtue.

But Shylock could not sleep. He sat by one of the dying fires and the wall of the mountain had a sombre glow, like the dark topazes of Spain, and it seemed to him that his life was ending in a dream. But sitting there in utter quietude he began to hear from another fire that still flickered up now and then with a blue, orange-hearted flame the swift, hot gutturals of Arabic. It was the fire about which sat the officers of the Sultan's court. Shylock peered through

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the darkness. Aye, there were two men more than the Emir Ahmed and his train. Softly and stealthily, protected by the shadow of the mountain, Shylock moved a little nearer to that other fire. He now saw the two strangers: tall, dark men not turbaned, but with shawls held by a fillet covering their heads. Behind the fire in the shadow he could now likewise see the crooked outlines of two camels, swaying their heads with a slow rhythm from side to side. Bedouins! He had seen others in Akko and between Akko and Haifa had seen them standing beside their low, black tents. But why were they so deep in conclave with the Turkish officers? And why did their voices, though subdued, seem to bark with a cold, wolfish rage? He thought upon the warning of Rabbi Joseph. But he had not the Arabic speech. It would avail him nothing to miss what rest his aged body could obtain against the hardships of the morrow.

Dawn leaped out of the sky in streams of fire and the travellers beheld, not without fear and awe, the cliffs of the Djebel Tur'ân arise before them. But even as they were getting ready to clamber up the dangerous paths of the mountain, there came riding toward them from the north a small, lithe, grey-bearded man on an ass. He rode up to Rabbi Joseph and Shylock. "*Shalom aleichem!*" he said. "Why

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did ye not send to Safed for a guide? Why did I have to gaze, with the help of the Holy one, blessed be He, into the *olam ha'aziluth*, the world eternal, in order to know that in the *olam ha' beriah*, the created world, Jews needed a guide?" Rabbi Joseph and Shylock bowed low before the small man whose eyes looked at them and yet through and beyond them. They waited courteously for him to tell them who he was. "I am the Rabbi Moses Cordovero of Safed," he said quietly. They bowed again before the great Kabbalist whose name had gone forth through his learned books. He stayed not for further speech with them but, regarding not the Turkish officers on their steeds, rode quietly to the head of the caravan and with a gesture of his small delicate brown hand bade the people to follow him. His quiet presence and sure knowledge of the paths seemed to give strength and assurance to the wanderers. Women swore later that from time to time they had seen an impalpable image in the shape of a golden Shield of David dance above his head. All that Shylock knew was that this second day's wayfaring, though it led over menacing mountains and beside terrible precipices, was easier and swifter than the first and that, long ere the dusk came, he saw gleaming between the folds of the hills the azure waters of Genasereth and that soon thereafter Rabbi Joseph and he and

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their people were safe in the ruined city of Tiberias. But the Rabbi Moses Cordovero was nowhere to be seen. It was rumoured that he had gone to pass the night on the grave of Rabban Jochanan ben Sakkai, as was his wont. But Shylock never saw him again.

On the next morning, Rabbi Joseph and he also visited the holy graves of the city, the resting-places of Maimonides, the Rambam, of Jochanan ben Sakkai and of the great Rabbi Akiba, high up the mountainside and returning to the south of the city beside the lake prayed in the house of study that stands beside the grave of the holy Rabbi Meir baal Ness. And again it seemed to Shylock as though he walked in a dream and was himself even now on the edge of *Gan Eden* and he desired to lie down here and give up his soul to the Eternal. But already he was summoned. The Pasha of Safed had spread abroad the command of the Sultan and from all sides masons and workers with their wives and children and beasts and gear were streaming into Tiberias from the villages that had been given to the Duke of Naxos and were eager for the work and for the Jewish money. In but three days the pits for the foundation stones of the walls were begun. And the men of the Jewish pilgrims, though few had ever handled a pick or a spade before but had been peddlers or money-changers or students or leeches, yet joined the Arabs in

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digging the pits for the walls about their city in their own land. And over the mountains began to come the cargoes of ships that had landed in Akko—cargoes of mulberry saplings to be planted and of bales of wool and of looms for the weavers and of grain for bread to last until the next harvest and even of kine and she-goats to give milk for the babes and the aged. These latter were the gift of Donna Grazia and of the Duchess Reyna, who had heard that the Arab cattle of Galilee were poor, wild meagre beasts. And saplings of fig trees were sent over the mountains and bees and hives from the rose-gardens of Donna Grazia and hill-bees that feed on the flowers of the wild lavender, for she had heard that the Holy Land of Israel had fallen into decay through war and neglect and savage men and she desired her people to have the wine and the figs, the milk and the honey which are spoken of in the words of the Torah.

The days and the weeks sped by and Sabbath seemed to tread upon the heels of Sabbath and the work went well and already great blocks of rough-hewn basalt were dragged by camels and asses toward the pits that had been digged to be the foundation stones of the walls, and huts of baked clay in the Arab fashion were built for the shelterless Jews and Sabbath candles began to shine from windows and, after

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the day's work, men gathered in the house of study and peace began to descend upon the city and its people. And old men among them, whose feet had trod the paths of exile for many weary years, whose brows had been furrowed by the long shame of the yellow hat, whose breasts had been seared by the Jew's sign worn upon them, whose backs had bent in unwilling obsequiousness to priest and knight and burgher—these old men grew clear of eye and certain of tread and with their pale hands planted seeds in the holy soil and arose and gazed calmly at the horizon. Seeing that it was early spring time, *Purim*, the feast of Esther came in the month of *Adar* and the youths and maidens and children, half forgetting the gloom of the past in this great glow of light and freedom, contented themselves not with the reading of the scroll of Esther, but staged them a masque beside the lake and enacted the old, old story of Israel's escape from danger and a fair youth enacted the part of Achashveroth, the king, and the fairer daughter of a Rabbi of Speyer the part of Esther, the queen, and a gallows had been built and in the end the wicked Haman was hanged in effigy and cups of wine were drunk and sweet cakes eaten, cakes baked with the honey and the almonds of the land.

Shylock sat on a stone beside the lake. He knew not why the spectacle gave him so little joy. He was

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too old, perchance; he had no mind for feasting. It may be that the gay youths and maidens brought to his memory that anguished Venetian night on which the masque of the Christians had mocked his grief over Jessica's treachery and flight. Nay, there was something else. On the outer edge of the circle of Jews who watched the *Purim* play, Arabs had gathered, not only people of the city and of the villages, but strangers, Bedouins of the desert, who had their small, unveiled women with them. Stirless as stones they sate, with grave empty faces. But among them Shylock saw the two men who on that night beside the mountain wall had been in conclave with the Emir Ahmed ibn Abdullah. And in the eyes of those two men it seemed to Shylock that he beheld a cold spark of enmity. It smote upon his heart; he desired to arise and tell the children of his people to cease from their gaiety. But that he could not bear to do, and under his breath he murmured a psalm, calling upon the Eternal for help for His people.

He slept little upon that night. He was summoned forth at dawn. Bedouins were pouring into the town; they came with their wives and children and black tents, with their camels and asses and goats; they had forded the Jordan south of Samach; they carried naked swords and daggers at their belts and the



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sheiks assembled and with long strides made their way to the house of a rich Arab, wherein the Emir Ahmed and the officers of the Sultan had taken up their dwelling. Thither Shylock and Rabbi Joseph ben Arduf hastened likewise. It was some time before they were admitted. Then in a high beautiful chamber, covered with rich rugs and adorned with lattice-work of carved wood, they found the *sheiks* of the Bedouins sitting in the presence of the Emir Ahmed and sipping sherbet. It was cool and pleasant in that chamber and but little of the fierce sun came in through the narrow windows set high in the wall. The vein on Shylock's forehead swelled. Treachery was in the air. He turned to the Emir: "What seek these men?" The Emir's strangely golden eyes were cold. "From time immemorial their tribes have come hither in the spring-time for the grazing of their flocks. It is a right and a custom from of old. Now the villages are filled with Jews and the grazing places with the Jew's cattle and these poor men's flocks are like to die of starvation. They desire me to send the cry of their distress to the Commander of the Faithful. They ask: 'Is there still a *Khalif* in Stamboul, or has the Jew Joseph Nassi dethroned and slain him?'" Shylock clenched his fists. "Have they brought witnesses from the villages in proof of their ancient rights?" "They have sworn by the

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beard of the Prophet." Shylock looked of the Emir; he looked into the faces of Under his eyes the faces waxed as rigid trable as the faces of the dead. There to be gleaned here. As in the old day guile must be met with guile. He bowe desire, *Effendi*, is not to dispute. But *firman* of our exalted Lord, which mus Let the Pasha of Safed judge concernir of these chiefs." He plucked Rabbi Jc sleeve and bade him hasten with him that were being dug and the walls that raised to question the villagers concerni ouins and their rights.

Into the hot sun they went and hasten and rubble and the stones of old time to the town and raised their hands and the knowing who was giving them grain a silver for their labour came in a thick, Rabbi Joseph ben Ardu, who spoke t asked them concerning the grazing ri *sheichs* from beyond the Jordan. Firs silence; next a murmur that rose and f again. Then the Arabs pushed out from a man wrinkled with age like a forgotte but still hale and erect. The old man spol Rabbi Joseph interpreted for Shylock. "

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people, O exalted presence," said the old man, "and this work is good and the pay is good. But of what avail are work or pay to a man when he is dead? We are no scribes or *ulemas*; tribes from beyond the river come yearly to steal our cattle and sometimes the fruits of our poor fields. How should we know whether they be the men of these chiefs or no. We are poor people. It may be that on their expeditions to steal cattle they also grazed their own among our villages. It may be. We are no scribes, O exalted presence; our eyes are feeble and our memories are short." A murmur, now of approval, went through the crowd like a wind through dry trees. Shylock felt as though he were throttled, as though the hot sand of the desert were being poured down his throat. No work of man availed for Israel. For here was the same inextricable coil of wrong as in Venice. Until the Eternal raised up a Redeemer for Zion, there was no hope. The Jews came to the land bringing trees and work and good to all men, shadow and grain, healing and peace. And the poor villagers desired to partake of these gifts, but the wild men of the desert would not let them and the officer of the Sultan made common cause with these.

Rabbi Joseph bade the people return to their work. He hoped that the old Arab who had spoken might be persuaded to tell the truth, if need were, to the

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Pasha of Safed who held the decree of the Sultan and would tremble to disobey. But the hopes of Rabbi Joseph, as Shylock knew, were but small. And as they went back through the town they saw that the Bedouins had penetrated into the streets and alleys and had set up their tents woven of the hair of black goats and they saw the lithe Bedouin women grinding corn between stones and saw the gleam of their silver bracelets and anklets. And from under a dark tent came the twanging of a stringed instrument and the voice of a youth singing: "I will set forth to the Prophet—on a young camel—that kneels and carries its burden.—A white, swift camel I will take—swaying as light of foot as the rope of the cistern.—I will give aid to Machmal pilgrims on the way;—I am an agile fighter,—no one is lacking to the caravan or holds back,—it is well that the whole tribe is assembled—if an evil should befall.—The whole pilgrimage shall I complete—a happy pilgrimage—and declare my faith before the countenance of light."

Shylock turned to the Rabbi Joseph, whose face had grown pale. "What is it that you hear?" Sorrowfully Joseph ben Arduf shook his head. "They are going to feign to themselves that the faith of their Prophet is in danger, that no more pilgrims will set out to Mecca or Medina or the Djebel Musa from

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here because of us and our people. They will lie and steal, if no worse, and believe that they are defending the honour of their Prophet." Shylock bowed his head. "Even as the Holy Office burns us to defend the honour of the Nazarite. I will dispatch a writing to Akko to be carried by ship to our master, Joseph Nassi. It may be that the Sultan can still help."

They went back to the hut of baked clay wherein they dwelt and Shylock got him ready a fair sheet of parchment and trimmed a fresh quill for writing and wrote in the holy tongue to Rabban Joseph Nassi at his great house in Stamboul. And even as he was writing, with Rabbi Joseph beside him, they became suddenly aware of a clamour, first faint and far, then coming nearer and nearer and presently past their house streamed in flight the Arab villagers, the masons and the diggers of earth and the carriers of burdens who had but just been working at the building of the new walls and the white dust rose under their brown, bare fleeing feet and their tattered burnouses fluttered behind them in the wind of their flight. And Shylock and Rabbi Joseph sought to stop them. But they escaped and left their garments rather than linger and were gone. With desperate and astonished eyes Shylock and Rabbi Joseph looked at each other and, as though drawn by a magician's spell, hastened to the walls abandoned

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by the workers. They stumbled over stones; they faltered into pits that had not yet been filled. They stopped suddenly and put their hands over their hearts. Four Jewish youths lay still beside their spades and trowels, stabbed in an hundred places there beside their work. And one of them was the fair youth who had played the part of King Achashveroth in the *Purim* play and blood flecked his dark locks and his arm thrown over his face to ward off a dagger looked like the arm of a child asleep.



THE NINTH CHAPTER

OF POWER AND OF TREACHERY

“No ill luck stirring but what lights on my shoulders.”

ONCE more Shylock repaired to the house of the Emir Ahmed ibn Abdullah. He entered; the servitors quailed before his eyes. He made his way into the high chamber and found the Emir alone. The Turk looked not at him, but showed no surprise at his coming. Shylock stood in the middle of the room and gnawed his beard.

“Since when is murder the answer to a *firman* of our exalted Lord? I saw you conferring with two of those Bedouin *sheichs* by night even upon our journey. Unless you cause me to be murdered too, the Sultan will send you a rope whatime you return to Stamboul.”

The Emir turned. “I have no power over these men. They are wild and proud. What would you have me do?”

Shylock’s forehead throbbed. “Send out your officers to apprehend the murderers and cause criers

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with drums to proclaim their execution tomorrow at dawn!"

The Emir cried out: "What? Because Jews have been killed?"

"Because innocent blood has been spilt! Do you know Selim so little? Will it be a little thing if the Duke of Naxos and Donna Grazia Nassi fling themselves at his feet and say that his will is spat upon in his dominions and that one of the least of the servants of his court has instigated the murder of the youths of their people?"

The Emir put his hand over his mouth. "I will send the officers forth."

Without salutation Shylock went from the house.

An ominous quietude had fallen over the town. The Bedouin tents were gone. Here and there a last camel, heavily laden, was still seen in the act of striking out toward the east. But the beast's hoofs made no sound in the deep golden sand. Only from afar Shylock heard wails: the wails of Jews. Rabbi Joseph had brought the evil news to the people. Of the Arab villagers there was no sign anywhere; the masons of Tiberias were hidden in their huts. The town was a town of silence and fear and death. Shylock's strength suddenly failed him. He sat him down on a stone in the sparse shade of a crumbling wall. The lake stretched out before him and dazzled

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him with its glitter; beyond rose higher and higher the mountains of the North. Hermon was there and also, beyond the vision of his old eyes, Lebanon and the mighty cedars whereof Solomon had built his summerhouse and caused to be carven the pillars of the Temple of God. He thought of the sages who had lived here in this town and written down the words of the *Talmud Yerushalmi*; he thought of the graves and of the living sages in Safed who had sung new songs and written new wisdom today and in this generation. And there passed before him in the procession of memory all the Jews of all lands that he had seen: people from Holland and Germany and France and Poland and Hungary and the dominions of all kings and bishops and other potentates. And when their hearts were opened they had all said: *L'shanah haba 'a b'Yerushalaim!* Next year in Jerusalem. Aye, this land was the Jews' land, to be redeemed by them today or in a thousand years, by men or by a Messiah. Shylock raised his head. "Though he slay me yet will I trust him." He spoke the sonorous Hebrew aloud. The Jews must put their trust in the Eternal.

He arose and heard the trampling of hoofs. He turned. Six of the officers of the Sultan's household were dashing eastward on their Arab horses, lithe, swift and graceful. The faces of the men were dark.

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The Emir had given strict orders. Fear had entered into his soul. Shylock saw in a flash the truth of this matter: the Emir had desired the Bedouins to frustrate the Jews' design; he had not desired blood to be shed; he had not desired to come before his master with murderous hands. He had a palace and a *harim* in Stamboul and sons to whom he desired the Sultan to be favourable. The riders dashed by him with averted faces. He was the evil conscience of their master. Aye, something would be done to appease him. He clasped his hands. What could be done to heal the terror in the hearts of his people? He had not seen them yet; he had only heard their wailing from afar. But the peace and assurance in their souls were too young to survive this hot and bloody storm. He knew, none so well as he, what he would behold upon their faces: the old fear and furtiveness, the age-long patience in sufferance which was the badge of all their tribe.

He returned to his house for rest. It was empty and that was well. Joseph ben Ardut was abroad comforting the people. Shylock laid him down and stared into emptiness. In his bosom stirred the old passionate impatience, the hatred and the scorn. He dreamed a waking dream of a great, free Jewish folk, which would armour itself with strength and with valour and, if need were, with the sword, even

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like the Christian and the Moslem peoples, and defend its right and be revenged upon its foes. And in his waking dream he saw an army with banners come out of the land of Israel and take ship for Venice and harry the proud Republic and impose terms on the Signoria even to the giving up of the isle of Cyprus where, he had once heard, long ago in the far days of Rome, Jews had been so numerous and warlike that they had rebelled and ruled the isle and slain their thousands because the Emperor Hadrian had forbidden even the sign of the covenant in Palestine and had threatened to turn Yerushalaim into a Roman city, dedicated to the gods of Rome.

He roused himself. A great thirst came upon him. He smiled a bitter smile. Age, he could see, had brought him but little wisdom. His vision was a foolish boy's vision. For more than thirteen centuries now, ever since that last war against the Roman, Israel had not touched a sword. Nay, not wholly because of its weakness. Peace is what all the sages had taught—peace and endurance and loving-kindness. There was not a word in Talmud or liturgy or in *Zohar*, the new book of mystic wisdom, that bade the people rebel or fight or even defend themselves. They were to do good and suffer patiently and pray and hope and thus make ready

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the universe for the Messiah. Shylock drank of the cool water in a pitcher of earthenware. He breathed deeply. Aye, the sages were right and his soul consented to their teaching. Only now and then suffering and injustice and the endless years thereof wrought upon the weakness of the flesh, as they had upon his in his desire to be revenged upon Antonio and again in this hour in his dream of pride and vengeance. He had better betake himself to prayer; it was more fitting for an Israelite. He would pray for wisdom, which alone prevailed from time to time over the cruelty of the heathen.

Next day the men of Tiberias and of the villages were back at their work of building the walls. The two Turkish officers who had not ridden eastward to find the murderers, paced up and down the pits and the walls on their horses. They feigned not to see Shylock as he passed along, leaning upon a staff. But the Arabs who were there at work saw him and muttered among each other and now and again, as he turned his back, a wail arose behind him. Ill omens, he thought to himself, and with a heavy heart wandered on to the huts of the Jews who were not digging nor planting nor working at their looms, but were mourning their dead and recalling old disasters in other lands and repeating psalms. And many, under the guidance of their teachers, were

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fasting in their shrouds even as on the day of Atone-
ment, in order to call upon the Eternal for mercy.
And a little spark of anger was kindled in Shylock's
breast. Might they not better work and by their
work take possession of the land? And he spoke to
Rabbi Joseph ben Ardu. But Rabbi Joseph shook
his head. "Another ship was to have come from our
master to Akko with new stores and new people. It
is overdue. No man or beast has crossed the moun-
tains for days. I know the favour of courts and that
it is a feeble thing; I know the wiles of the Arabs
and that they are many and subtle. Let the people
pray."

For the space of three days the Jews mourned
and the Arabs muttered and worked. The officers
of the Sultan came back from beyond the Jordan
with three men, who had been given up to them
as the murderers of Tiberias. But the men, a small,
cunning, agile man and a young one-eyed giant and
a feeble ancient grey-beard were not of the Bedouins
at all; they were Arab peasants from the eastern
lands. And all three denied their guilt and the Emir
Ahmed said that a *Kadi* must try them, since he
dared not take upon himself the sin of punishing
the innocent. He put them into the prison house
of the town. Thither Shylock brought the Jews who
had been near them that had been slain and it was

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proven that these three men had been beside the walls with daggers, the Bedouin *sheiks* not desiring to bring blood-guiltiness upon themselves or their families. Therefore Shylock demanded that the accused and the witnesses be taken to Safed to be tried in the Pasha's court. To this the Emir Ahmed reluctantly consented. But on the morning of the fourth day a new confusion arose. Once more the Arabs fled from the walls; once more the work lay deserted in the sun. But this time they hastened not to their houses, but to the free square in front of the mosque, where they sat down in a great semi-circle and listened to the harangue of an old man in a filthy white burnous and a turban dark with dirt who stretched his brown hands to the sky and whirled about on his bare feet and uttered strange cries and ululations. Rabbi Joseph came to call Shylock to witness the scene from the shadow of a rock. Foam began to spatter from the old Moslem's mouth; his eyes disappeared in his head, so that only the ghastly whites of them could be seen. But he kept speaking and crying and ululating and the Arabs in the circle round about him bent them to the earth and groaned and wept. Shylock turned to Rabbi Joseph, whose face was pale and desperate. "I have feared many things—not this, nay, not this." He listened a while longer to the old Moslem's



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voice which growled and barked and muttered and then rose in a high, toneless wail. "It is a *sherif* from the coast of Yemen," said Rabbi Joseph, "who has thrice made on foot the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina and Yerushalaim and the holy mount of Musa and there, in a cave of the Djebel Musa, he says, he found a prophetic parchment on which it is written in the speech of the times of the Prophet of God, that if ever the walls of the city of Tiberias be raised again it will be for a sign that the religion of the Prophet will perish and that they who cause the walls to rise will be the blackest of sinners and the murderers of their faith."

Shylock clasped his hands and rested his chin upon them. "Let us demand that he show the writing to the people."

Rabbi Joseph shook his head sadly. "These people have their cunning in planting and working and chaffering for a camel or a wife; their souls are simple. If we ask the *sherif* to show the prophecy, they will set down that demand to the stubborn treachery of unbelieving Jews. His words and his cries persuade them wholly. You are thinking of our people, good Shylock. When Reübeni had persuaded kings and the Pope, the wisest among us doubted his claims and his mission. Nay, the rules of logic and of evidence will not avail here."

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“What do you counsel then?”

“There is a last thing left to be done,” said Rabbi Joseph slowly. “The whole matter must be laid before the Pasha. He has under his hand the written word and seal of Selim. I doubt not but what he will help for the hour, the day, the month.”

“But you do not believe that we will build a city and bring our people hither to dwell in it?” asked Shylock.

Slowly the Rabbi Joseph turned to go. “We have sinned. It is not this generation that will return. The face of the Eternal is turned from us.”

Shylock lifted his clenched fists: “And the other nations who own the earth and grind us under their feet—have they not sinned? Are their souls and hands clean?”

A faint flush came into the cheeks of the Rabbi Joseph ben Ardu; he fixed his eyes upon the earth as one desiring not to see a shameful thing. “I am persuaded that it is sorrow, good Rabbi, which wrings from you the argument of the Epicurean; the other nations did not accept the Law from Horeb.”

Shylock lowered his head likewise. He sought to accept the just rebuke calmly. But the old rage against the injustice of the world seethed in his breast.

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Shylock did not know how it had come about, but fear of the future had clearly taken hold of the Emir Ahmed ibn Abdullah. He appeared with his officers on the square in front of the mosque; he caused the crowd to be scattered and commanded certain peasant *sheiks* of the villages to be taken in custody. He muttered with the aged *sherif*, who retired into the mosque to pray. Then Ahmed sent for Shylock and Joseph ben Ardu and with them and his officers and the three men accused of the murder of the Jews and the village chiefs set out incontinently for the city of Safed to lay the matter before the Pasha. Even before dawn the riders set out on their way north and in the cool of the early morning saw the mountains flush with rose against the sky that was first a faint purple and then began to glow, as out of the east the dawn came like a fiery lily of a thousand petals aflame with all the fires of heaven. They prayed, both the Jews and the Moslems. Then they toiled on over the mountain paths. At noon they rested in the shadow of rocks; late at night they clambered up the hill and the hill-built streets of Safed. Curtly the Emir Ahmed told Shylock that the Pasha would hold his court in his palace in the cool of the next morning. A messenger had been sent ahead.

High on his divan under a canopy in a tall,

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vaulted chamber sat the Pasha of Safed, a short man, inordinately fat, with cold lecherous black eyes set in rolls of flesh that hid the high cheek-bones of the Turk. His scribes sat below him and one of them held up high the *firman* of the Sultan. The Pasha was angry. He did not like to be disturbed. He asked how it was possible to disobey a command of the Sultan and *Khalif*? His glance rested irritably on the Emir Ahmed. The latter pointed to the three men accused of murder: the small, cunning man, the huge, one-eyed youth, the grey-beard; he pointed to the village chiefs whom he had brought. He said that it was for the Pasha to execute justice. He had done all that his authority justified. The fat Pasha straightened himself up; he laid his scimitar in its heavy silver sheath across his knees. He waved his hand. The small man was brought forward; his eyes twinkled. "I am innocent, O exalted Presence, as shall be made evident." There was a stirring and shuffling heard at the door. In came with bowed heads a crowd of villagers. "May they approach?" said the small man. "They are my witnesses." The men rushed forward and threw themselves on their faces. The oldest among them cried out: "The killing of the dog Jews—did it not occur on the eleventh day of the month of *Chaban*? But on that day Yusuf, whom ye accuse, was in his

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village walking in the marriage procession of his son. We are here to swear it! We have come a long way."

Rabbi Joseph ben Ardut bowed to the Pasha and spoke a word to him in the Turkish tongue. The Pasha nodded. He fixed his eyes on the accused. "It was on the eleventh day of the month of *Chaban* that you walked in the marriage procession of your son in your village?" The little man's eyes twinkled. "The Prophet of God saw me." "You are a man of knowledge," said the Pasha. "What day of what month is today?" The small man pursed his lips; his twinkling eyes grew sad. "O exalted Presence, why do you ask an innocent man unanswerable questions? Am I an *ulema*, a learned scribe, who knows the date of the days?" The Pasha clapped his hands. His executioners came forth from behind his canopied divan. The Pasha pointed to the huge one-eyed youth. "You are innocent, too?" "I am a sick man," was the answer. "God is angry with me. I have a pain here." He struck his chest. "I cannot hurt a gazelle." The Pasha frowned. "What is your calling?" The youth rocked his body proudly on his hips. "I am a prize-wrestler, O exalted Presence! Bring forth the wrestlers of your excellent court—" The Pasha clapped his hands. The executioners came forward and took the youth between them. The

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Pasha turned to the old man. "And why didst thou kill, O greybeard?" "I did not kill; my blows are the feeble blows of an old man. But seeing that the word came to all the Faithful that the Jews must be killed, how could I, a poor and ignorant old man, hang back?" For the third time the Pasha clapped his hands and the executioners took the old man. The Pasha nodded and they took the village chiefs from the country about Tiberias. The Pasha tapped his fat fingers on the silver sheath of his scimitar. He addressed himself to the Emir Ahmed. He spoke to him in Turkish, so that the Arabs could not understand. "You know what happens to those who disobey the commands of our sublime Lord? Take the heads of all these caitiffs back to Tiberias; stick them on poles; then will the work be done." He put his hand to his fat throat. "You can risk your head, if you like. I have a *firman* there in the hands of my scribe. See that it is obeyed."

A crying and wailing went up from the villagers who were in the chamber. An executioner drove them forth with a whip. Then, through a small door beside the divan of the Pasha, the executioners disappeared with the three men and the village chiefs. A terror came into Shylock's breast. He had ill understood. He clutched the sleeve of Rabbi Joseph. "What will happen?"

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“They are cutting off the heads of the murderers and the village chiefs in the courtyard; they will stick them up on poles in the city. The walls will be raised.”

Shylock clasped his hands. “Nay,” he murmured, “nay, nay—that will bring us no good.” Joseph ben Ardu fixed his mild eyes on Shylock. “It will bring us no good. I know that; aye, I know it. And this, look you, is what I have foreseen and feared: resistance and vengeance, guilt and blood. And now are our hands no longer clean, and we are made a strife unto our neighbours. Not thus will men declare the name of the Lord in Zion and his praise in Yerushalaim. Not thus.” The Rabbi Joseph covered his eyes with his sleeve. Together he and Shylock went out into the courtyard, leaving the Pasha still conferring with the Emir Ahmed.

The executioners were wiping their swords. In front of them lay the dead men with their severed heads. Blood streamed and sickered between the stones of the court. Shylock looked swiftly and as swiftly averted his eyes. A hard cold lump was in his throat. His eyes burned as though a flame were searing them. He laughed grimly into his beard. How little Antonio had had to fear from him! How little the fierce world had to fear from Israel—a weak people and a people that could not endure the

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sight of blood, that drained the blood even from the beasts that it ate, a people of prayers, a people of suffering. Where had he heard the words that nothing is harder than a Jewish heart? Aye, from Antonio. Once he had whetted a knife upon his shoe. It had been a gesture of rage; it had been a moment's release of the pent-up shames and humiliations of the years. Blood! He dared not look behind him even as Joseph ben Ardu^t dared not. They tottered a little, the younger man and the older; they came forth from the Pasha's house. They stood in the glare of the hill-built street that rose steeply at their right. Higher up in little houses clustered about a synagogue dwelt the holy sages of Safed. Shylock and Joseph ben Ardu^t looked at each other. They dared not climb the hill and ask a blessing of the sages. They were too enmeshed and entangled in the vileness of the material world. And the masters would know; their eyes could gaze deep—aye, to the very heart.

So it was with souls cast down that, on the dawn of the next day, Shylock and Rabbi Joseph returned with the Turks and divers men of the Pasha who bore, on long wooden pikes, the heads of the slain men, to the city of Tiberias. The pikes were planted at the four corners of the town and a proclamation issued to the Arabs in the name of Allâh, the Merci-

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ful and of the Lord Mohammed and of the Commander of the Faithful, that now the work of rebuilding the walls was to be continued and that the answer to any disobedience would be the executioner's sword. There were a few among the Jews who rejoiced and bore themselves proudly. But most of them were cast down, having no stomach for blood or for the might of the sword. They worked at their tasks, for they had left their far homes and old occupations. But peace and freedom had gone out of their lives once more and they sent a messenger to Safed for counsel from the mystic sages and cast their renewed contempt upon the material world and began to spend their nights in prayer beside the graves of the Rabbanim of old in order to draw the Mercy of the Eternal and His Messiah from the sky and weakened themselves by continuous fasts and even self-macerations. Rabbi Joseph repeated to them the Talmudic warning against self-torment and asceticism. They paid no heed.

Nor did the Jews hold it to be of good omen that the Arabs, digging very deep at a corner of the city for a great tower's foundation, came upon a ladder under a huge stone and, descending there into the earth, found a long subterranean passage that led to a great church filled with statues of marble and altars of marble, such as are to be seen in the churches of

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the Christians. They also found three great bells of brass that had been buried there by the last Christian king of Jerusalem, whatime he and his soldiers were hard beset by the conquering Turks. Earth was thrown into the church and its statues and altars buried forever and of the brazen bells the Emir Ahmed commanded pieces of ordnance to be cast wherewith to defend the new walls of the city. But at these walls the Jews now worked no more. They had come with a great hope; they had sent their midwives to help the Arab women in labour and their leeches to heal the sick and had worked beside the Arabs and called them brethren, remembering the words of the Torah that the sojourner in the land of Israel was to be entreated even as the home-born. Now they retired to their huts and sat at their looms or went to the synagogue beside the lake, minded as though they were still in exile and happy only in the thought of the merit in the eternal world that belongs to whoever dies in the land. Nor did messengers come over the mountains from any ship in the harbour of Akko and Rabbi Joseph and Shylock took counsel with each other, wondering what had befallen in Stamboul and whether the changeable favour of kings had already been withdrawn from the Jew, Joseph Nassi. And it was determined that Shylock should fare forth and return to Stam-

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boul, leaving gold and authority with Joseph ben Ardu, and discover what was in the soul of their master toward the rebuilding of the cities and villages of the land.

He did not know that his old heart could still know such heaviness. In the dreams of the night he saw the masques of Venice and saw the executioners of Safed dance under torches on the Piazza di San Marco and now the Pasha of Safed appeared to him in guise of the priest of the Basilica and again he was haunted by a face and knew not whether it was Antonio's or that of the Emir Ahmed and one of the heads on the terrible wooden pikes in Tiberias turned suddenly into the head of Jessica and laughed a scornful laugh. He arose from these dreams and prayed and took leave of his people and of the good Rabbi Joseph and lifted his eyes for a last time to the hills of the North and toward the south where lay Tabor and Zion. For his soul told him that he was not fated to see the land again.



THE TENTH CHAPTER

OF TUMULT AND A LAST JOURNEY

*“You take my house when you do take the prop
That doth sustain my house.”*

SHYLOCK lay at the same inn to which Shelomo had once conducted him. He had made the voyage from Akko in a ship owned by Greeks of Aleppo. On that ship the very water had been green and slimy and even the dried dates mildewed. Had he not brought with him a bag containing raisins of Palestine and a few pounds of *Matzoth* left over from a sad, disastrous Passover in Tiberias, he would have died of hunger. Rats scurried on that ship and dragged slivers of salted swine's flesh out of the very hands of the Greek sailors, poor, naked, beaten, landless slaves who crossed themselves in superstitious terror each time that they beheld his face. There was scarcely water to be had for the washing of the hands commanded by the Law and each time that Shylock had asked for a ewer the Greeks had believed that he was about to perform an evil rite to their hurt. He needed once again rest

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and refreshment before appearing at his master's house.

The little innkeeper had almost danced with excitement when he had set Shylock's first meal before him. He walked with mincing steps; he raised his eyebrows; he gesticulated without speaking. Shylock was wroth. "Thou art a man in Israel with grey in thy beard. Act not like an ape!"

The innkeeper came close. "I have a matter to communicate to the high Rabbi. It troubles me."

"Aye," said Shylock. "Speak."

The innkeeper ran to each of the two doors of the room and opened it with a sudden, stealthy movement to assure himself that there were no listeners. Then on tiptoe he returned and sat down on the bench beside his guest. "I am troubled," he whispered, "I am troubled. Five times, long after sundown, there has come hither to my inn a *Goy*, even a *Frank*, and sat him down and asked for wine and thrown a golden ducat on the table. He is wrapt in a long black cloak, but under his coat I have seen the shimmer of brocade and the glint of a jewelled sword. He sits here, where you are sitting, here, and waits. Then there comes another to meet him—a *Moslem*." The innkeeper raised his hands and spread his fingers out. He tore his eyes wide open. "Only the *Moslem* is not a *Moslem*; it is *Nathan* the

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meshumad, apostate and informer—may his name be blotted out—who is a henchman of the Grand Vizier, Mohammed Sokolli and therefore the enemy of the Duke.”

Shylock raised his eyes warily. “How comest thou to know that?”

The innkeeper came nearer. “We are poor people; the inn scarcely keeps us; a pestilence carried away my older brother and his wife and the children fell to my charge. So I sent the oldest boy to be a scullion in the kitchens of Daud.”

“Daud, the Sultan’s Jewish leech?” Shylock asked.

“Even him. And Nathan the Apostate is admitted through the kitchen door to confer with Daud late at night when the cooks are gone and only my nephew is left to scrub the floors. And late one night my nephew followed Nathan through a thousand alleys to the palace of the Grand Vizier; and again on another night he followed him and on his way to the markets of a morning he had speech with a cook of the Grand Vizier. Nathan dwells in Sokolli’s palace. And why does he come here to meet the Frank and show him parchments over which they laugh together? Why? I tremble. And my uncle’s wife’s brother, who is a gardener in the rose-gardens of the Duchess Reyna came running hither but yes-

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ter-eve to tell me that the Duke is cast down and that the Duchess withdrew to an arbour to weep and that woe broods over the palace and that the Duke has not been summoned to the Sultan's presence for weeks. What betides us? For if the Duke fall, who is the prop of the house of Israel in this land, what will sustain the holy congregations? For the Moslems love us not and the Greeks and the Armenians murmur against us."

Shylock lifted a finger. "Speak not of this to any. On the morrow I go to see our master. Thou mayest reap a reward for thy knowledge. If the Frank and the apostate meet here again, watch them well. Perhaps I will have thee summoned to the Duke."

It was on the next morning that Shylock rode out to the palace of Belvedere. A servitor led him straight to the presence of Joseph Nassi, who was pacing up and down with hands behind his back in the same chamber that opened on the court of the fountain. He stopped and turned and, seeing Shylock in the door, hastened to embrace him. "Thou hast come to an ill-omened house, old friend. Doubtless thou hast come to inquire why no ships came to Akko." He laughed a bitter laugh. "All men are the prey of mutability and fortune is an inconstant wench. So say the poets, and it is true. But I have watched the world, Shylock, and I have seen fortune so fickle

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only to those who have neither honour nor constancy. I have practised both and yet I am undone. I am a Jew, and men cannot bear to see me great; I am a Jew and they cannot bear to see me help my people. But the wound that aches most is that it is Daud, a Jew himself, who hates me because I befriended him, because he owes me too much—Daud, who is my bitterest foe. Sit beside me, Shylock; let me tell thee the tale. Thou art old and wise. Perhaps thou canst give me good counsel.”

Joseph Nassi drew Shylock down on a divan beside him. He spoke swiftly now but calmly. It was the Sultan Selim himself who had been wroth over the refusal of the King Charles IX of France to pay the debts of his house to the house of Nassi, which was now a ducal house in the dominions of the Osmanli. Against Joseph Nassi’s desire he had issued a *firman* that all French merchant ships in Turkish harbours were to be captured and held as pledges of this debt and eighteen rich ships, most of them in the harbour of Alexandria, had been held with their cargoes of silk and other precious stuffs, of basilisk cannon and other work of the armourers of France. Now had Monseigneur Grandchamp, the French ambassador, appeared before Selim and had declared that his King and master refused to pay the Jew Nassi, who had relapsed with all his house from the

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Christian faith, because this Jew was known in Europe to be, like all his kind, faithless and treacherous, and that it would be proven to the Sultan that the Jew had not changed his true nature in the sun of the imperial favour of Stamboul. Selim had laughed in his beard. But Mohammed Sokolli had said that so grave an accusation against so high a dignitary must be proved and had with his cold smile demanded that, within a space of twenty days, Monseigneur Grandchamp prove his accusation or withdraw it. The twenty days had passed. Then Grandchamp had come into the presence of the Sultan with documents delivered to him by Daud, the Jewish leech. These were parchment letters, purporting to be written in the hand of Joseph Nassi himself, letters to all the enemies of the Sublime Porte, the Florentines, the Genoese, the Venetians, offering for gold and mercantile advantages the favour and support of the Duke of Naxos to all their schemes and plottings in Stamboul. Joseph Nassi pressed his hands to his head. "I besought my Lord for a sight of but one of those documents. He sent a messenger with one. Shylock, if my conscience had not been clear, I, too, would have sworn that it was my hand. Now Selim hides himself in silence. He desires not to believe; he cannot disbelieve."

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Shylock took the Duke's hand. "Did you ever have in your pay and service a youth named Nathan?"

Joseph Nassi looked stern. "Aye, a good scrivener. But a varlet, subtile and over-soft, an effeminate knave. He dared to counsel me one day to accept Islam. I struck him and dismissed him from my service. He disappeared."

"The Eternal, blessed be He, is with us," said Shylock. "It is this Nathan, this *meshumad*, now a henchman of the Grand Vizier, who has forged the documents at Daud's instigation and sells them to Grandchamp. Send sure and secret servants to watch from sundown until midnight the inn of Moses Pereira in the Jews' quarter. Let them capture Nathan and deliver him to the officers of the Sultan. Let him be given stripes until he confesses."

Joseph Nassi laughed with joy. "Art thou a wizard?"

Shylock folded his hands. "I have seen sorrow and injustice in the long years of my life; I have seen many things worthy of hate. Is it not right that a crumb of comfort be cast to us now and then from the table of Him above?"

He related his story to Joseph Nassi. Armed servitors were sent forth, who took Nathan at the inn under the very eyes of Monseigneur Grandchamp that night. Upon him was found a new forgery, a

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letter purporting to open negotiations with the Pope of Rome and signed by the Duke of Naxos. There were needed no stripes to make Nathan confess. At the sight of the lash he cried for mercy. The Grand Vizier, knowing of Daud's hostility and of Grandchamp's bitter scheming, had sent him to the house of Daud, where he had been instructed concerning what he must do to win a great reward from the Frenchman. But neither Daud nor Sokolli desired Grandchamp to come to their dwellings upon this errand and Nathan, more subtile of hand than of brain, chose the inn of Moses Pereira as the place of meeting.

When these news were brought to the Sultan Selim, he ordered a great feast to be celebrated at his court. Joseph Nassi, returning from the court, said to Shylock: "He wept. For he is lonely and hath few to trust. He was perplexed in the extreme. by my seeming defection and treachery. He wished to slay Daud on the instant. I begged him to exile the leech to Rhodes. I have no mind for the dagger or the cord. But do thou, Shylock, go forth and proclaim this matter to the remnants of our ill-starred race. For truly, I trembled less for myself than for the congregations."

The news went forth into all corners of the empire and the rabbinical councils of Stamboul and

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alonika and Safed pronounced the *cherem*, the bann
f ex-communication, against Daud and his crea-
ires and the Sultan Selim, averting his face for a
me even from the Grand Vizier Mohammed
okolli, demanded the daily presence of the Duke of
Jaxos, as though to repose himself at last wholly
pon the bosom of this trusted friend. Yet Shylock,
ho dwelt now in the palace of Belvedere, saw a
iange come over the Duke. Joseph Nassi was like
bow that had been bent too often; strength, con-
dence and resilience had gone out of him. Return-
ng from the court he would cast aside his robes of
ate with a weary gesture and throw himself upon
divan and lie there with eyes wide-open. Not even
e tenderness of Reyna, still young and beautiful,
ad power to give him joy. Shylock reminded him
f the Jewish wanderers waiting for ships to take
iem to Tiberias and forgotten save for the ever
igilant loving-kindness of Donna Grazia. Joseph
Nassi rose a little and leaned his head upon his
and. "Send ships and gear. My treasury is there—
pen for thee. But neither that nor ought else will
ome to a good end. Look ye: such is the fashion of
e world! I said to myself in my youth: I will be
ue and brave; I will save the good name of our
ation and somehow, somewhere, establish a rem-
ant thereof in peace. I have gotten vast treasure and

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spent it again; there have been noble souls, like my dead Lord Suleiman and my living Lord Selim, to understand and to aid me. Yet have I always been defeated by the sluggish hearts of men and the ordure that fills the world. Consider the accursed Daud. Aye, he failed. But it was by chance, a thousandth chance that he failed. I asked neither him nor any man to love me. But could he not love Israel enough to conquer his envy of me? Must there always be a traitor at the gate and a serpent at our feet? Nor do I care for the gold of the French King. Feasts weary me; I want not dancing-girls or eunuchs like the Moslem lords; God hath not even given me a child to whom to leave either name or treasure. Justice is what I have sought in order to be able to practise mercy. I am almost persuaded that the world was so created that it will always lack both and were it not for the small help I can give our people, I would put away from me offices and honours and go a barefoot pilgrim to Yerushalaim."

Shylock bowed his head in acquiescence.

"And now," said Joseph Nassi, "now that I am weary, my Lord is minded to take the counsel I gave him long ago and to send a fleet against the isle of Cyprus and wrest the isle from the Venetians. Mohammed Sokolli, commanded to transmit secret orders to the admiral of the fleet, said to my Lord that

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his spies had long discovered that I would be King of Cyprus and had in a secret chamber of my palace a royal Cyprian flag bearing as my escutcheon the shield of David over a candelabrum with seven branches.” Joseph Nassi arose. “And my Lord laughed in his beard and the Grand Vizier made but a wry face. Yet both—the Eternal forgive me for comparing them—both are ignorant of what is passing in my soul. For it is not out of loyalty to my Lord that I desire not to be King; I do not desire to be King at all, even as I desired not to be Duke. Vain baubles are these titles and glories. Oppression is before them and the dagger of the assassin behind. Nay, I would not be King even in Israel. Treasure is good, for it protects us and helps the poor of our people. But power is an evil thing. Hast thou marked the bitter glances of Prince Murad? He prays for his father’s death to rule in his stead and even the good deeds of his father will seem evil to him because they, even they, came between him and his thirst for power. Nay, I desire peace. I desire to go out in torn garments among poor men and pray unobserved in their company.”

Again Shylock bowed. “Yet it were well,” he said, “to see the Venetians humbled.”

Joseph Nassi laughed a melancholy laugh. “They wounded thee sorely. ’Tis well. Thou shalt see the

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expedition if thou wilt. For I must have an almoner go with the fleet. For centuries in memory of old wars and rebellions no Jew was permitted to set foot on the Cyprian shore. But of late years many have settled there and they are poor people and neither the assaulting Moslems nor the Venetians would use them any way but ill. Thou shalt go and perhaps see the banners of Venice that float over Famagusta trailing in the dust."

Thus spake Joseph Nassi. But neither he nor Shylock, his servant, attended to the preparation of the great fleet that was to set out against Cyprus. Gloom hung over the palace of Belvedere, a gloom so deep that the cypresses seemed no longer to stir in the wind of the straits. For the angel of death was holding his wing over Donna Grazia Nassi. She was not yet old and she had ailed little. But hope too is needed for life and she had set all her heart upon the rebuilding of Tiberias and the resettlement of her people in the land of Israel. It was in vain that Joseph Nassi summoned Shylock to her bedside to assure her that, in spite of ill fortune and evil men, the walls of the city were re-arising. Her prophetic soul knew that dust and forgetfulness were destined to cover her high-hearted plans. With her last vivid gesture she raised her arms and grasped her head with her long, transparent hands. "Why must it be

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so? Has the Eternal utterly forgotten us? We asked not to be driven out of our homeland; we asked not to become a people of sorrow and acquainted with grief; we strike not back at our tormentors; we would go back to the land of our fathers carrying gifts of peace, healing, even of gold to the poor pitiful barbarians who dwell there. But all the powers and principalities of the world are against us and neither wisdom nor wealth nor goodness nor charity avail us aught. What is to be the end?" Once more thereafter she revived for a little and bade her daughter Reyna and her son, Joseph Nassi, to use her fortune for houses of prayer and of study, for learned men and the printing of their works, for the succour of her people in all the lands of exile. Thereupon she yielded herself wholly to the weakness of her body and expired three days later with the declaration of the Unity upon her lips.

Great was the pomp of her obsequies, for all the Jews of Stamboul came weeping to bid farewell to their benefactress and the Sultan Selim sent the gorgeous lords and pashas of his court and an escort of cavalry draped in the Moslem colours of mourning. But Joseph Nassi and Reyna walked on foot and in simple garments and with bowed heads, liking not the pomp and circumstance nor even the too-swelling words of the Rabbi Joshua Soncino: "She is

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no more, our most serene princess, the glory of Israel, the shining flower of our exile, who builded her house on purity and holiness, who protected the poor and saved the afflicted in order to make men happy on earth and blessed in the world to come.” They returned on foot to the palace and sat upon the floor in mourning and strewed ashes upon their heads, weeping not only for the mother who had left them but for the high hopes perished with her valiant spirit.

The seven days of mourning being at an end and the fleet for Cyprus ready to depart, Joseph Nassi bade Shylock, if his strength still served him, to take much gold from the treasury and sail, as the Duke’s almoner, in the high Admiral’s ship upon the Cyprian expedition. And wrath against Venice flamed up once more in the heart of Shylock and he was well contented to go. Since no good works of peace could be done, nor none, being begun, carried to a happy end, let there be war and confusion, let there be fire and death, let the evil world consume itself in the flame of its own hatreds and dissensions and let the proud Venetians feel that rod wherewith they had smitten others. Shylock got him a robe of velvet as befitted the almoner of the Duke of Naxos and the Duke hung about his neck a golden chain of office. A place had been made ready for him

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on the ship of the Admiral, for it was known in the secret councils of the Sultan that the Venetians would avenge themselves first on the Turkish subjects living in their dominions, of whom the greater part were Jewish merchants. Thus ships of the house of Nassi stood outside of the harbour of Venice and it was planned to bring the fugitive Turkish Jews to the new-conquered isle of Cyprus, seeing that Stam-boul and Salonika were already overcrowded with Jews from all parts of Europe and that both Mos-lems and Christians refrained from murmuring openly against them only because of the great favour in which the Duke of Naxos stood at the Sultan's court.

It was a great fleet of caravels and galleys that sailed with streaming pennants and gilded prows toward the East. Brazen pieces of ordnance stood on the decks and the fighting men came from all parts of the dominions of the Sultan. There were small, swift men from the Asian plains and tall Arabs from the African desert lands and even blackamoors from farthest Ethiopia and men of Egypt with skins like dull copper and red-moustachiod Berbers from the southern shores of the great sea. And all the army had turbans with crescents of silver and scimitars of Damascus and red pointed boots of the leather workers of the Prince of Morocco. And Shylock felt



ARTHUR SCHA
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lonely in this throng, a poor, feeble old man, although he was honourably entreated, and almost conceived a longing for the long ago and the crowded Ghetto of Venice with its many brethren and its brown house of study and its synagogue. Thence he had been able to go forth into the city and on the Rialto and chaffer and gain gold and power with the keen pleasurable knowledge that thereby he increased the security and credit of the Jewish community. Here, on the Admiral's ship, he was lost in a huge and alien splendour and even the remembrance of the greatness of him he served comforted him not.

The news of the great expedition of the Sultan had been carried abroad by a thousand secret rumours and the fleet met neither merchantman nor pirate's ship. The carven prows of Selim's vessels swept over a glossy sea each day into the dawn that burst over the scarce visible Asian shore and fled each eve from the huge copper disc of the sun hanging over the far-away Pillars of Hercules. Only amid the many isles of the Icarian sea did shy fishermen show from afar their orange-coloured sails between the two dazzling blues of sea and sky. After the violet cliffs of Rhodes had been left behind, the ships steering straight eastward now, sailed over deserted waters, meeting only sea-mews, hearing only their sharp

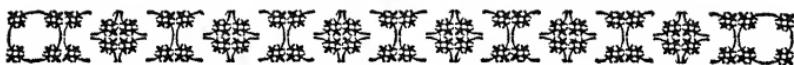
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desolate cries until there arose from the waters, at the sunset hour of a day, the walls and towers of the citadel of Famagusta, the Cyprian capital.

Now did the captains and the ordnance masters gather their men, and bags of powder were brought from the holds of the ships by sweating slaves and battering rams and other engines of assault were prepared and the warriors slept but a brief uneasy sleep prone on the decks that night, for the city was to be assaulted in the morning and taken, if Allâh were favourable to the arms of the Turk, by a swift and sudden surprise. In the darkness torches flared and by their light could be seen the flashing of sabres and the glint of the brazen cannons and white teeth shimmering from black beards and lips drawn back in eagerness for slaughter and booty and the women of the conquered. And Shylock clasped his hands, a stranger in a strange place, and a great fear came into his heart for the wounds and the suffering of human creatures that would come to pass in the dawn and he cared no more in that dread hour who won the city or to whom was the victory, but prayed to the Eternal to cause to arise, this year and in this generation, if such were His will, a redeemer for Zion to lead Israel out from the wars and conflicts and bloodthirstiness of the nations and bring it to its own land in peace.

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Dawn flung its fiery banners athwart the sky and the brazen cannons began to flash and roar and the frail ships shook and trembled as though they were about to be riven in sunder and, seeking security from their own fire, moved nearer and nearer to the Cyprian shore. Now soldiers urged on by their captains flung themselves forth and waded through the shallow water and now the guns of the citadel began to reply and arquebuses and long-bows appeared on the walls and towers and heavy bolts and arrows flew and men wading in the water were struck and Shylock beheld a Turk drawing an arrow out of his eye and the eye with it and heard the man's sudden shriek as blood gushed from the wound and he fell into the weedy water of the shore. And Shylock cast his old frame upon the deck and hid his face in darkness and prayed. The tumult rose and died and rose again. Dawn passed into burning noon. Shylock drew his praying-shawl over his head but lifted not his face to look upon the bloody and the evil ways of man.



T H E E L E V E N T H C H A P T E R

OF A TALE TOLD HIM IN CYPRUS

*“These be the Christian husbands. I have a daughter;
Would any of the stock of Barrabas
Had been her husband rather than a Christian.”*

THE city of Famagusta yielded after a few days of constant assaults. It was not only the suddenness of the attack that helped the Turks to so swift a victory. Intrigue and rivalry had weakened the commanders of Venice; sloth and lechery had taken hold upon her mercenaries. Captains and soldiers of her armies had polish and a kind of poisonous subtilty. Their taste in gems and pictures did not make them true nor their cruelty brave. They were the tools of their arrogant Church but jeered openly at the commands of the Nazarite. Remembering the splendour of their city, seeing them here again as gorgeous and as faithless as of old, Shylock was persuaded that he was more akin of soul to the poor Arab of the farthest desert who, rude, unlettered, wild, yet did believe with all the fierceness of his simple heart that the Lord Mohammed

Of a Tale Told Him in Cyprus

had bidden his faithful to conquer and subdue the earth.

Not long after the city was taken and the Venetians had departed from Cyprus came the expected news. The Signoria, furious and revengeful, had caused all Turkish subjects dwelling in the Republic to be cast into her dungeons and threatened to expel all Jews instantly from her dominions. But the Turkish ambassador to Venice had gone no farther than Ferrara, whence he began immediate negotiations for peace with the helpless Venetians, warning them not to provoke to the utmost the Duke of Naxos whom the Sultan loved. Thus many were set free from the dungeons and the order for the expulsion of the Jews, though not revoked, was not harshly enforced. Many preferred, nevertheless, especially those of the poorer sort, to board the caravels of Joseph Nassi waiting in the Hadrian sea and try their fortune in a new land where, as they hoped, the power of the Duke would be their shield. These, then, came to Shylock, the almoner of the house of Nassi in the island of Cyprus and asked for shelter and food, for bales of goods to trade with or morsels of land to till, for synagogues and houses of study, for schools for their children and healing for their sick. Few of them had any worldly goods; many of them were recent fugitives to Italy from

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countries of the North and of the East. They spoke a German dialect of which Shylock understood no syllable though he had once, in his far youth, been in Frankfurt and they chewed and mumbled their Hebrew words in a manner that had no meaning to his ears. Early he toiled with them and late; he soothed and commanded and scolded; he bought small bazaars and tiny vineyards in the hills of the island and fig groves for some to cultivate and almond groves for others. He begged the Turkish admiral for guards for the farms of the Jews, for the Greek peasantry were told by their brutish priests to beware of the Christ-killers who used the blood of Christian children to bake their unleavened bread and stole and tortured the body of Christ in the form of the holy wafer in the monstrance and cast the evil eye upon all men and, being the common enemies of mankind, poisoned the wells, spreading pestilence and woe. A great wrath and a great despair came into the heart of Shylock. His people asked only to live in peace, only to toil at their tasks for a mouthful of bread on the days of the week and a mouthful of fish on the Sabbath; they besought him not for greater profit or better food or more delicate raiment, only for a teacher's house for their young and a house of study for their old and yet Turkish guards had to watch the build-

Of a Tale Told Him in Cyprus

ing of school and *Beth ha-Midrash*, for the islanders tore down by night what had been built by day, deeming that temples of evil magic were being erected on their soil. And Shylock foresaw that the Turks would grow weary of guarding the farmsteads of the Jews and that these would be driven back to take refuge in the cities and huddle together for security in their own quarters and incur the reproach of all men as cheats and usurers and parasites. For already a Sicilian rogue named Autolycus walked through the streets of Famagusta and sang ballads, merry and brave, in which he bade women and maids buy their white lawns and sweet-scented gloves and amber necklaces and golden quoifs and stomachers from him, a merry Christian and not from the unbelieving Jews who had but of late come as strangers and enemies over the sea. Hearing this man and other strollers of the same kidney, Shylock gathered in his house the more subtle men among the younger Jews and gave each a bag of golden ducats and bade them insinuate themselves into the favour of sundry Cyprians of the better sort and practise the trade of money-lending, seeing that gold and the protection that gold gives was the only safe shield of a Jew against the barbarous multitude.

The months of his stay in Cyprus had been many and weary and he was all but ready to depart when

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news was brought him that on a Greek ship in the harbour of Famagusta had come a little group of Jewish fugitives from Venice, who had not made speed enough to embark on the ships of the Duke of Naxos and had besought the master of the Greek vessel to take them to Cyprus where their passage-money would be paid. These Jews were now imprisoned in the ship in the harbour, for the Greek captain was hoping that none would pay the passage-money and that he could enrich himself by selling the people as slaves to the master of a ship of the Bey of Tunis that lay beside his own at anchor in the roadstead. Shylock hastened forth to the bay and was rowed to the Greek ship. At first the master denied all knowledge of the matter, but being threatened with search by the officers of the Turkish governor, consented at last to take passage-money. He snarled a command down a dark shaft and up the slimy ladder out of the foul hold came first a feeble old man and his wife and next a full-bosomed woman in fine raiment worn over-long who gazed at Shylock with bold, naked eyes that showed him that she was one who brought shame upon Israel and last, staggering up the ladder, came a slender woman swathed and hooded in black, with a child held close to her and two tiny children clinging to her. Dizzily she stepped upon the deck and her hood



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fell back a little and she lifted her eyes and beheld Shylock and gave a forlorn cry. It was Jessica.

Now did a war begin between the heart of old Shylock and his members; for his heart was wroth and to his lips came bitter words, such as “ungrateful child” and “renegade” and “rather would I see her dead at my feet than with these *mamzerim*, these bastards, clinging to her.” But even while his lips spoke these bitter words, his hands betrayed him, stretching out, as though by their own will, toward Jessica, touching her cheek and her frail shoulder. And what was most strange of all, these rebellious hands of his desired to lay their palms upon the dark heads of the two small man children, the *mamzerim* who, at the sight of the stern-eyed old man, clung more desperately to their mother’s black robe.

“Where is the *Goy*, Lorenzo, thy husband?” asked Shylock. “Thou art a Christian, art not? Why should I pay the Duke’s gold to ransom thee?”

Jessica lifted her brown eyes to her father and clasped more closely the babe to her bosom and spoke no word. Shylock coughed and tried to turn the cough into a rebuke and barked strangely instead and turned and called to the master of the ship and gave him gold for the passage-money and turned without a word from the leering Greek and with

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hand and staff herded, as it were, his little flock of the ransomed before him, muttering imprecations against the bold-eyed woman, keeping Jessica and her children close to his hands and breast.

Upon the shore Shylock sent the old couple and the bold-eyed woman to the barracks where the fugitives were first housed. He did not bid Jessica not to go with them nor did he speak a kind word to her, but with a trembling hand he held her arm as the others departed. Thus she remained behind and then followed him as he strode toward the house in Famagusta in which he dwelt. He murmured and grumbled as they crossed the threshold; he turned and held up his hands in anticipatory horror. "Are thy brats circumcised?" Jessica shook her head sadly. Shylock beat with his staff on the floor and there appeared the old woman, who ministered to his house and him, a Jewess from far Babylon with wrinkles that looked like carven ivory. Shylock pointed over his shoulder. "Give food and water for washing and a couch to—to these. Then run and fetch me the *Mohel* and a few worthy men from among the neighbours. I'll not let the sun set on this shame." The old Babylonian woman put an arm about Jessica and led her and her babes through an inner door into another chamber.

It was the hour of *Mincha*, the afternoon prayer,

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and Shylock turning his face toward the east in the direction of Yerushalaim raised his voice: "Happy are they who dwell in Thy house! Without ceasing shall they praise Thee, Selah! Happy is the people who is His own; happy is the people whose God is the Eternal!" He tried to keep the joy out of his voice; he sought to assume a morose expression of countenance. But the hour and the prayer were stronger than himself. Tears, not of sorrow, rolled down his beard; long and fervently did he sing the praises of his God. He came to the last benediction: "*Baruch atha Adonai, shomer amo Yisra'el la'ad!*" Blessed art Thou, O Eternal, guardian forever of Thy folk Israel." He wiped his eyes and heard a soft rustling behind him. Jessica came forward and threw herself at his feet. She bowed her head to the very earth. He laid his hands upon it for a blessing. There was a silence between them. Neither had found again the habit of speaking to the other. Jessica raised her head and opened her lips, but even at that moment came a knocking at the door. The *Mohel* and the men of the congregation had come in answer to Shylock's summons. Now was there turmoil for a space. Jessica, covering her face in shame, fled into the inner chamber. Thence was heard the wailing of the children. But presently came in the old Babylonian woman with ewers of water and a

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small basin of sand for the foreskins. Shylock turned to his brethren. "There will be no *se'uda*, no feast after this covenant of circumcision. Do I even know whether I have the right? But good may come of it. I cannot keep the children in their heathen estate."

The men assented and the *Mohel* drew his two-edged knife from a leathern case. The Babylonian woman, having placed an arm-chair for the Prophet Elijah, hastened back into the inner chamber whence she and Jessica returned with the three children. A different man of the congregation held each child, as its *sandak*, its god-father, during the ceremony and with the shadow of a grim smile about the corners of his beard Shylock commanded the three boys to be named Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov. The women withdrew with the weeping children and Shylock offered his brethren a cup of wine. They were eager to know all the history of this daughter of their friend, but Shylock was sparing of speech. She had lived and lost her husband in a heathen land, he said, where there were no Israelites. He prayed the Eternal that the belated circumcision would not be held as a sin against the innocent babes who were, at least in part, his own flesh and blood.

In the cool of that evening, as Shylock was reposing himself on the roof of his house, meditating upon the devious ways of fate, Jessica came to him

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and sate at his feet. By the dim star-light he saw her worn young face; he thought of his wife Leah and of far years and bent forward and kissed the forehead of his child. Then did Jessica first weep low and long with her head against the knees of her aged father and afterwards she found speech, acknowledging her sins, protesting her youth, telling the tale of her sad adventures.

Perhaps it was, she pleaded, because there was no mother in the house and so no feasts and little joy; perhaps it was that beauty, of the nature of which she had little knowledge, had had too strong a lure for her. But she remembered that, when she was but a little maid, she wept when she heard serenades upon the lagoons and saw the gorgeous processions on Corpus Christi day; she felt that all the other children in the world had beauty and merriment and the sweet light of the sky as their own. Only not she and her few sombre playmates. And even as she grew older she always had that ache in her heart—an ache like the ache of a poor beggar child, standing at the closed gate of a garden and seeing within beautiful and rich and happy children upon the smooth lawns under the sheltering trees. She knew all the while that it was a heinous sin in her to feel shut out from a world that was not hers, to be ashamed of her own people and of her very father. She would try to mas-

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ter the longings in her soul; aye, she tried even the few prayers that a woman was taught. But the long tediousness of the Ghetto days wrought upon her again and her heart had throbbed by day and by night and strange dreams and palpable visions had pursued her. She fell silent. Shylock nodded his head. "I should have given thee a husband, child. My mind was set on other things." She drew closer to him. It was in this burning feverish time that Lorenzo, brave and gay and handsome, had followed her one day on the Piazza. She had gone to the shore, by the statue of the winged lion, and he had followed her thither, too, and with a graceful gesture taken off his plumed hat and bowed low and called her the most beautiful maiden that ever mortal eye had seen. She had fled. But after that she had haunted the Piazza day by day. She met him again and he slipped into her hand a little square of parchment. She had put it into her bosom and fled once more and locked herself into her chamber to read the fair, clear writing and it was a sonnet indited to her very self and she had nearly swooned at the lovely lilt and singing syllables of the sweet Italian tongue. Now she was lost, lost indeed. For now she was that poor beggar child at the gate invited into the happy garden to join the other children whose melodious speech and merry cries had always broken her heart.

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Now did she daily have speech with Lorenzo, who called her fair and true and wise and swore to place her in his constant soul. He swore he loved her well and stole her soul with many vows of faith. He spake ever like a poet and believed his words with all his heart while he was speaking them. He led her at dusk to places where men made sweet music and the music filled her with an aching, swooning sadness; the concord of harmonious sounds wrapt her beyond herself and she was like a thing captured, bewitched, no more, no more herself. She would have followed Lorenzo as his mere slave to the ends of the earth. But he in truth was ever honourable in his dealings with her and asked no favours that a maiden might not grant and only urged that she flee from her father's house and turn Christian and become his loving wife. Nor was it he, though both Gratiano and himself had rarely a ducat between them and seemed to live so gaily and festively on air and hope and credit and gifts—nor was it he that urged her to rob her father's house. But she deemed herself so unworthy of him; she was so much still the poor beggar child that she felt she must bring her lordly lover a dowry and took the two sealed bags of ducats and the diamond ring and the turquoise ring that once had been her mother's. Aye, Lorenzo accepted the gold; but he accepted gold,

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which he held to be but dross, from Antonio and Bassanio and later from the Lady Portia. They had no thrift, these fair, proud folk; they gave few charitable gifts, but they held it a matter of honour and gallant living to share their gold, however come by, with their friends and boon companions. And this spirit, said Jessica, seemed to her at first most noble, as it had, in truth, a kind of freedom and nobility. She was so weary of the hoarding of wealth for security or power and for ransoming slaves and for scrolls of the Law for poor congregations. She was but a child and now a passionate and dazzled child living suddenly in a fairy world where feasts and masques came daily, where fine raiment was worn all the day long, where no one took thought for the morrow; for if evil chance came one could be the guest of a friend without shame or carry one's skin to market as a soldier or even sing for one's bread, twanging a mandolin, along some moonlit street. And she wanted not to be outdone by her brave, gay husband and his friends nor held to be a fawning thrifty Jewess and therefore, dizzy with unaccustomed wine, she had spent four score ducats on one night in Genoa, bidding Lorenzo gather all the nobler gallants of the city to their feast and had thrown the turquoise ring to a brown Levantine who

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had a monkey, dressed at all points like a magnifico of Venice, for sale.

Next morning conscience had made a coward of her and she had hidden the diamond ring in her bosom. But they had now fared onward to Belmont and there—Jessica raised her face—there life had seemed to be all gold. For the Lady Portia had in truth a high and noble soul that drew to it all good and all beauty, that made all feasts seemly and all mouths eloquent. Yet very strangely, as the months sped by and Jessica knew that her first child would be born, a sadness and impatience had come upon her. She had wondered how long this golden time would last. Nor did she know whether she would desire to have it perdurable. For she and her husband were only guests and servitors at a stranger's board. Wine flowed and music sounded softly and madrigals were sung and tales were told, like the tales of the Florentine ladies chronicled by one Messer Giovanni Boccaccio of old and Jessica began to have unsought visions of her father's sober house with the whole world shut out and the Sabbath candles burning. Aye, she desired a shelter and a home for the child that was coming and she desired the child's father to engage in some manly art or trade. She had besought Lorenzo to take her away, if but to some humble dwelling. But he had laughed

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and taunted her with loving him no more and loving no more the Lady Portia and the Lord Bassanio and had made a jest of his sweet wench, as he called her, at that evening's feast. And once more she had besought him even on her knees and had offered him the diamond ring. He had taken it. But he had turned from her surlily. "What wouldest thou have of me? I cannot sell the diamond and lend the money out at interest, like the fiend Jew, thy father! I thought thou hadst turned Christian." After that she had besought him no more. But she knew soon thereafter that he had sold the diamond ring, for he bought a noble steed and brave garments for himself and even silks for her, who had not swaddling clothes for the babe that was coming, and rode into Naples and returned thence with a silver medal upon which had been wrought in pure relief work an image of the goddess Venus toying with her paramour Adonis. And Lorenzo sware that this medal was in truth the work of the old age of the great Florentine Messer Benvenuto Cellini and he gave it as a gift to the Lady Portia, who accepted it with joy from her sweet friends Lorenzo and Jessica and gave Jessica, amid the scent of flowers and the strumming of instruments, a golden bauble to pin upon her breast.

The feasts continued day by day. But a cloud sate

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now upon the brow of the mistress of Belmont and Bassanio and Gratiano and Lorenzo were seen daily in whispered conferences and a great fear came, she knew not why, into the heart of Jessica. She asked her husband; he said it was naught. She asked Nerissa and Nerissa, weeping, said that the Lord Bassanio was weary of this life, since youth stood in need of high emprise and honour and adventure and that, if he engaged not in these, he was but an unworthy spouse of his lady. The accursed Turk, said he, was harrying Christendom; he had conquered Hungary; some day he would stand at the very gates of Venice. And so Bassanio and Gratiano and Lorenzo had made a pact with each other that they would ride off to the wars and would come back crowned with the laurels of victory and the palms of the defenders of Christ and his mother. Aye, they had ridden off. The Lady Portia and Nerissa, despite their tears, had been proud of their husbands and had retired to a convent to pray for their safe return. But Jessica had felt her new life die in her heart and had known that she was a stranger amid strangers and had borne her child in a windy, solitary room in the castle of Belmont and had had as friend to whom to make her plaint only the harsh billows of the autumnal sea.

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Shylock's hand was on his daughter's head. "But thy husband returned to thee?"

Jessica nodded. "He always returned, nor do I say that he loved me not. His heart was in truth constant to me, though he would not spare to tell me of the fair wenches who had been kind to him in Illyria or Venice or in the Hungarian camps. And when Bassanio and Gratiano and he came back from the wars, saying that knighthood was dead and there was no more honour to be had upon foughten fields, he and my Lord Bassanio seemed fallen out with each other and a serving-man whom I chid threw it at me that the falling out had been over a wench in Venice, who kept open house for the gallants of the city. Even this serving-man, a Neapolitan knave, conceiving an evil passion for the Lady Portia, taunted Bassanio in her presence with his amours. Then shouldst thou have seen the debonair Bassanio. Afraid of losing his lady's favour and wealth, he wove her a story wherein Lorenzo was the villain and the base seducer and there were no more feasts and no more music, but silence and dark looks and taunts and Lorenzo, swearing his honour would not brook such treatment, took me and the child to a hovel in Naples."

Jessica pressed her forehead between her hands. "We became wanderers. Lorenzo applied to princes

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and great lords for service but obtained it not. He dispatched a missive to Antonio of Venice but no answer came. When our second child was born he bade me discover where thou wert, saying he could not feed a brood of Jew brats. Aye, he repented of his speech and borrowed a ducat from a boon companion and brought me a length of silk and sware I was still his sweet wench. Whenever he had a ducat there was wine and music; when there was none there were sour looks and reproaches. The world, said Lorenzo, was falling into its yellow leaf; honour and chivalry were no more; great lords were curtailing their trains; tradesmen and Jews were rising. What, he asked, was a poor gentleman to do? He wandered forth and came back, thinking not of the needs of me and his babes, and I was often reduced to the meanest labour and even to beggary. Then did I think of thy house, my father, and of all the houses of our people, even those of the poorest, and the honour done to our women. I wept my youth away and looked old the while Lorenzo was as ever fresh and handsome. And more and more rare grew the hours in which he called me his sweet wench. From Naples we wandered to Rome and once more Lorenzo disappeared and I wandered to the Ghetto on the banks of the Tiber and the people, holding me to be a Jewish widow, gave me food and raiment

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and even money from the chests of the great congregation. I dared not tell them my tale, for fear of their anger and their curse. But I inquired of an aged Rabbi concerning the fate of one Shylock of Venice. He told me that thou hadst escaped the rage of the Venetians and wert in the service of Joseph Nassi, the Duke of Naxos. Then did I weep, my father, and bless the Eternal of Israel and remember the tales of our people that thou hadst told and read to me in my green and foolish girlhood and my heart swelled and I was proud to be thy child and I registered an oath in heaven that I would seek thee out and beseech thy forgiveness. Yet think not that I no longer loved Lorenzo. I could not drive him from my woman's heart. And never did he cease to have his festive and caressing ways. If fortune but smiled on him a little and he had but two ducats in his purse he became lover and poet and playmate and took no thought for the morrow. Yet did these seasons grow ever more rare. From Rome we wandered to Florence and from thence to Genoa; at last the Signoria gave Lorenzo a place in Verona. He was appointed to keep daily watch in the Casa dei Mercanti on the Piazza d'Erbe to see to it that the woollen weavers measured not with false measures. But he was ashamed of so churlish a trade; he grieved and fretted and grew cruel. Now

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did he taunt me daily with my race and faith, saying he had fallen on my account to an almost Jewish occupation. And one day he met some gallants in the Loggia, whom he had known in Venice, and they made sport of him and daggers and rapiers were drawn and all were flown with wine and a man was left for dead on the Piazza dei Signori and Lorenzo fled. I made my way to Venice and bore my last babe in a hovel among thieves and harlots and heard of the ships of the Duke of Naxos and prayed the Eternal for strength. But he answered not my prayer. At last I wandered forth with my babes and met the woman whom thou sawest—aye, she was a harlot in Venice, yet was she kind to me—and she told me of the Greek ship that might bring me hither. And in that foul ship's hold she gave me food and fetched me water and, having never had a child, was tender toward my little ones. Thou must help her, father, and not cast her out from Israel.”

The weary head of Jessica drooped and was laid upon her father's knee. Long did those two remain thus in silence under the wheeling stars.



T H E T W E L F T H C H A P T E R

OF A QUIET ENDING

*“You may as well do anything most hard,
As seek to soften that—than which what’s harder?—
His Jewish heart.”*

A PEACE descended upon Shylock from this day on. Perhaps it was the peace of his near three score years and ten; perhaps it was the peace of a man who, knowing that he has progeny, casts off the burden he has borne long enough upon the shoulders of the generations that come after him. It was written, he remembered with gratitude, of more than one of the Rabbanim of the great age that he was the descendant of proselytes. Thus from the house beside the Bosphorus, at the foot of his master’s garden, where Shylock dwelt with Jessica and her boys, he would see the two elder ones and in later years the three, set forth in the clear morning on their way to the school in the almond grove founded now long ago by Grazia Nassi. And whether it was by reason of their mixed blood or not, Avraham and Yitzchak ben Shylock, as they were called,

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had beautiful sturdy bodies as well as a great appetite for learning and were soon deep in their Talmudic folios, mastering the island of text, adepts in steering through the surrounding oceans of commentary. Afternoon came and they returned and again the old man was at the window to see them in their little black robes and black caps from which struggled forth the soft sweet locks of childhood.

He had no more the sudden gusts of hatred and rebellion against the injustice of the world. He resigned himself to the will of the Eternal. There came one from the East and told with tears the tale of how, upon the eve of a certain Sabbath, the great and holy Kabbalist, the Rabbi Isaac Luria, had gone forth from the gates of the city with his disciples to welcome in the Princess Sabbath. Suddenly he had turned to his disciples and bidden them fare with him on the instant to Yerushalaim to celebrate the Sabbath there. But sundry of his disciples had murmured, saying they were not ready, pleading that they must say farewell to their wives. Isaac Luria had covered his face and cried out in despair: "Woe unto us unworthy! Even as I spoke I saw in vision the Messiah approach Yerushalaim. Had ye not hesitated we would have been redeemed from our exile even in this hour!" With tears the tale was

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told. But Shylock answered in the words of a sage: "This too may be for good."

Often at the sunset hour he would go into the great house of Belvedere to hold converse with his master, Joseph Nassi, who, though not yet an old man, had also come to have a quieter soul. He still kept watch over the affairs of his house and his emissaries both of trade and of charity were in all the harbour cities of Italy and of the Levant. But he sought no more to change the course of things. He had never been able to break the power of the subtle Vizier Mohammed Sokolli; it consoled him that the sly Italian employed another and most faithful Jew, Salomon Ashkenazi, on many diplomatic missions to Europe, since this Ashkenazi stood up stoutly for his brethren and carried the gifts of the house of Nassi to far cities and oppressed communities. Joseph had come to see too that this far-flung Turkish empire would not long hold together. Truculent janissaries intimidated the court of Stamboul; Pashas in Bagdad and Egypt and Maghreb flung off the authority of the Sultan. In this huge welter and tumult of the world there was naught that a Jew could do for his people save heal their wounds as these were inflicted, save succour those who were in sorest need, save trust in the Eternal who had before raised up empires and cast them down, but had never permitted

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His people to perish. Thus when the last Marranos of the great expulsion, deeming themselves safe in the farthest Indies, were faced once more with the flames of the Inquisition in the ultimate city of Mexico, Joseph Nassi sent a ship to Vera Cruz, but having done so turned calmly to the studies which were now his delight and held with his companions those discourses concerning the value of philosophy and the folly of astrological superstition which his friend and secretary, Isaac Onqueneiro, recorded later in the book "Ben porath Joseph."

Presages came of storms and evil days in the future. Thus the violent and bitter Prince Murad beheld near the great mosque in Stamboul a maiden of surpassing beauty with uncovered face and sent his eunuchs forth to fetch her for his *harim*. But the maiden was a Jewess of high birth and the strictest virtue, who would have taken poison rather than endure the unlawful embraces of a Moslem. She fled with her kinsmen first to Pera, to the house of the Duke of Naxos and thence to an island of the Ægean sea. Murad and his Turks rode with drawn scimitars through the city and threatened to trample under their horses' hoofs any Jewess who wore silk or velvet or went with unveiled face, and Murad sware a great oath that when his weakling father Selim died, he would be revenged upon the foul un-

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believers. Joseph Nassi sent Murad a huge bag of gold, even as one would throw a bone at a snarling cur and went to the house of prayer to beseech the Eternal to protect Israel. He spake with Shylock and Onqueneiro and his other friends upon that night. "I am no Kabbalist, but I am beginning to believe that there exist in truth two worlds. There is the world of the senses which is naught but tumult and sinfulness and evil and which cannot be saved or even touched by anything within itself or partaking of it and its qualities. And there is another world, the intelligible and eternal world of values and ideas in which it is given us to dwell with our better part and it is possible that from this eternal world influences may be made to stream into the world of the senses and touch it and heal it and mayhap save it in the end of days. Therefore, my friends, I seek no longer to erect the walls of cities or to send either trees or looms to the East. I hold Murad and his lust and rage and the bag of gold I sent him to be of the same quality and of the same nothingness. The substance that is left my house now and in after days shall be given wholly for places of prayer and places of study and places where may be imprinted the writings of the learned and the holy. Let us serve the intelligible world. All else is dross. From the intelligible world the Messiah must



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come, not from this sensible world of injustice and hatred and folly."

Shylock imparted this speech, which he carried away in his heart, to his two elder grandsons. He inscribed it, as well as he could remember it, upon parchment in the holy tongue, in order that the boys might possess and treasure it in later years. He himself, freed at last from the long fever of the earth and its turmoil, addressed himself once more to the studies of his youth, which he had abandoned in order to gain gold and power and revenge for the shames put upon him and all his tribe. In the *Beth ha-Midrash*, on the shore of the straits, he sat through long and dreamy days beginning at the beginning the study of the sacred books with the tractate of *Berachoth* or Benedictions. But never did he complete that mighty tractate. For he returned ever to the sixteenth and seventeenth folios and, having read farther, returned again to these. For on these folios, as it seemed to him, there was written enough matter to employ the meditation of his few remaining days. From the radiant sky a shaft of sunlight fell into the *Beth ha-Midrash* and the murmur of the tide blended with the intoning of the learned. And Shylock, too, intoned softly: "When Rabbi Jochanan had ended his prayers, he was wont to speak as follows: 'May it be Thy will, O Lord, our

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God, that Thou regardest our shame and our misery, that Thou clothest Thyself in Thy mercy, coverest Thyself with Thy might, swallest Thyself in Thy love and girdest Thee with Thy grace: thus may Thy loving-kindness and long-suffering be manifest before Thee.’’ And he read on concerning the sayings of Rabbi Zera and of Rabbi Chija and meditated for the remnant of that day even beyond the lighting of the candles upon the words of the Rabbi Saphra: “May it be Thy will, O Lord, our God, that Thou establishest PEACE in Thy Family above and Thy family below and among the disciples who devote themselves to the study of Thy *Torah*, whether they do so wholly for the sake of the *Torah* itself or whether they do it not wholly for the *Torah*’s sake. But may all whose devotion is not wholly selfless grow by Thy will into a devotion that is wholly so.” Shylock rested his head upon his hands. To live by that wisdom was truly to be placed, as another sage said, in a “corner of light” and not in a “corner of darkness.” But these sayings applied to a pure and permanent world. How could one rise into such a world? How could one but get a glimpse of it amid this dust and heat of mortality? Like a pageant his own long turbulent life passed in vision through his soul. He had been a great sinner according to the sages. “A gentle answer quenches

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wrath. We should increase PEACE among our brethren, our kinsmen, all men, even in respect of the non-Jew on the public ways. It is related of the Rabbi Jochanan ben Zakkai that he greeted all men first, even a non-Jew on the highway." He wondered whether Jochanan ben Zakkai had ever seen such sights as the face of the Doge or the faces of the torch-bearers who lit the pyres of Ancona or the smug lips and stupid eyes of Antonio or the icy unfathomable hostility of the Emir Ahmed ibn Abdullah? Had the sage lived in a world so homeless? The sage of old had at least lived in the Land of Israel, even though amid a people oppressed, even though under the lash of Rome. Aye, harder and harder had grown the ages of the earth. Yet Shylock knew that he had been but a sinner and beat his breast in contrition and was abundantly grateful for that the Eternal had given him three descendants who would say the *Kaddish* prayer in his memory in the time, soon to come, when he would be no more.

Thus, spending long days in the house of study, conversing with his grandsons in the evening, called now and then before the face of his master, Joseph Nassi, Shylock lived on for sundry years. For not too many, it seemed to Jessica later. He was spared the untimely death of the Duke; he was spared the

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tumult and the cruelty of the years of the reign of Murad, who confiscated nearly all the fortunes of the Nassis and left the Duchess Reyna scarce substance enough to feed a few poor at her table and support a few of the learned in her schools. Yet Jessica grieved that her father had not lived to see one thing: the return of Avraham from Safed, a Rabbi, almost, despite his tender years, a sage—a light of Israel, a comforter of his people in their exile. It was not long before the youth's departure for the East that Shylock had become too feeble to go from his house to the house of study beside the straits. It had been the time of the almond blossoms and on the *Seder* night of that year's Passover he had still spoken and softly chanted the ritual. But during the days that followed the strong flame of his life flickered and was gradually extinguished. At the dawn of a mild day, his white head against his daughter's bosom, his hands stretched out toward his grandsons, he had given up his now undisquieted soul, as some say, to *Gan Eden* or, as others aver, to an eternal sleep.

THE END

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